



# GRANDPA'S LITTLE GIRLS

ALICE TURNER CURTIS





Florence Walpole

1911

















SHE STARTED AFTER THE DOG

# Grandpa's Little Girls

BY

ALICE TURNER CURTIS

AUTHOR OF

"GRANDPA'S LITTLE GIRLS AT SCHOOL "

"GRANDPA'S LITTLE GIRLS AND  
THEIR FRIENDS "

"GRANDPA'S LITTLE GIRLS' HOUSE-BOAT PARTY "

" GRANDPA'S LITTLE GIRLS AND MISS ABITHA "

Illustrated by WUANITA SMITH



THE PENN PUBLISHING  
COMPANY PHILADELPHIA

MCMXI

COPYRIGHT  
1907 BY  
THE PENN  
PUBLISHING  
COMPANY





## Introduction

THIS is a story of two little girls, Constance and Eunice Newman, who are fortunate in having just the right sort of grandparents. There were good times both in the work and play of the little girls on their grandfather's farm, and they found a very unusual sort of teacher in Miss Abitha, who had many fascinating ideas about dolls and gardening, outdoor lessons, and winter picnics. The little girls in their year on the farm learned a good many things without knowing they were learning, and throughout the story the spirit of helpfulness and good nature is always present. Those who are interested in Constance and Eunice will find something more about them in "Grandpa's Little Girls at School," "Grandpa's Little Girls and Their Friends," "Grandpa's Little Girls' House-boat Party," and "Grandpa's Little Girls and Miss Abitha."



## Contents

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	"SISTER" AND "LAMB" ARRIVE . . .	7
II	"SISTER PETER" . . . . .	14
III	THE TOP SHELF . . . . .	26
IV	"PETER" MAKES A RESOLVE . . . . .	35
V	MISS ABITHA'S SCHOOL . . . . .	46
VI	THE WINTER PICNIC . . . . .	56
VII	A STORMY SUNDAY . . . . .	68
VIII	THE CHRISTMAS PLAN . . . . .	78
IX	CONSTANCE MAKES A NEW PLAN . . . . .	87
X	VISITORS AT SCHOOL . . . . .	97
XI	THE NEXT SHELF . . . . .	106
XII	ALL KINDS OF PLANS . . . . .	120
XIII	RATS IN THE SPARE ROOM . . . . .	129
XIV	HOUSE-CLEANING BEGINS . . . . .	137
XV	AFTER ARBUTUS . . . . .	149
XVI	TAMING A FAWN . . . . .	157
XVII	A DAY OF SURPRISES . . . . .	168
XVIII	SISTER'S TELEGRAM . . . . .	178
XIX	A PRESENT FOR MR. NEUMAN . . . . .	186
XX	GRANDMOTHER'S BIRTHDAY . . . . .	195





## Illustrations

	PAGE
SHE STARTED AFTER THE DOG . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
"THEY ARE FOR US," SHE EXCLAIMED . . . . .	30
SHE LANDED IN THE SOFT SNOW . . . . .	94
MISS ABITHA TOLD THEM A STORY . . . . .	130
THE FAWN SNIFFED THE BASKET HUNGRILY . .	160





# Grandpa's Little Girls

## CHAPTER I

### "SISTER" AND "LAMB" ARRIVE

GRANDFATHER NEUMAN had hitched old "Lion" into the high-backed two-seated sleigh and was just pulling on his warm woolen mittens when he heard grandma's voice calling "Jabez! Jabez!"

"What is it, mother?" he called back, while the old white horse turned its head toward its master as if to ask a reason for the delay.

"Jabez," called grandmother anxiously, coming out on the back porch with a little plaid shawl over her head, "remember that the train gets in at just five. Don't stay over at Simpson's store talking with the men and let those poor children have to wait at the depot for you."

"I'll be right on hand, mother," Mr. Neuman called back, waving a mittened hand, as he climbed into the sleigh and started for the village.

"Forget to meet the train," he said to himself, slapping the reins down on Lion's back, "well, I guess not, when Henry's little girls are coming on it. Let

me see, Constance is about ten, if I remember right and Eunice going on eight," and grandfather smiled to himself, for he had been looking forward to having his little granddaughters visit their father's old home, and now the time had come. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Neuman were going to California for the winter, and their children were to stay with Grandfather Neuman.

"Quite a journey for them to take," continued Grandfather Neuman, as the sleigh slipped smoothly over the white road. "Leave Boston at eight this morning and it will be nigh on to six before their grandma can give them their supper," and Mr. Neuman smiled again, and looked at the pile of warm fur robes that he had brought to wrap around the travelers, and drew his own robe more closely about him.

The lights at the little station were shining out through the early dusk when grandfather drove up to the narrow platform. "Train on time to-night?" he called out to the station agent who was pushing a small truck down the platform.

"Right to the minute," responded the man; "expecting some of your folks?"

"Yes," said Mr. Neuman, "yes, Henry's daughters are coming to stay all winter with us."

"I want to know," said the man. "Well, you'll be wanting to keep 'em right along, won't ye?"

"You're pretty quick-witted, Smith," chuckled Mr. Neuman; "of course mother and I don't know anything about the little gals, that is to say about their

disposition and habits, we ain't seen 'em since they were babies, but we were thinking that if one of 'em took a fancy to us old folks we'd admire to keep her and bring her up, but we ain't mentioned it."

"I won't say nothing about it," said Mr. Smith gravely.

Grandfather Neuman nodded. "No," he said, "I didn't s'pose you would. We shan't say anything about it ourselves until we see if the children are happy, and if we are happy to have 'em here."

Just then a long shrill whistle warned them of the approach of the train, and the station agent hurried after a lantern, while Mr. Neuman got out of the sleigh and stood by "Lion's" head. For the old horse always made believe that he was very much afraid of a steam engine, and his master humored him by always standing at his head and saying "Whoa, Lion, whoa." Then the old horse and its master would look at each other as if they both thought it a very good joke.

But to-night Mr. Neuman only said, "Whoa," once, and Lion looked in surprise to see grandfather hurrying down the platform to where the cars stopped.

"There they are!" exclaimed the old gentleman as he saw two small girls come down the car steps, and in a moment his arms were around them both and they were calling him "Grandpa," and all three were asking and answering questions. Grandpa soon had them tucked warmly into the sleigh, one on each side

*Grandpa's Little Girls*

of him on the front seat, while their trunk filled the back seat, and old Lion started off for home at his best pace.

"Now," said grandpa, "I don't know which one of you is the oldest."

"Oh, Sister is," exclaimed the little girl on his left; "you know her real name is Constance, but that is mamma's name, too, so we always call her Sister."

"And your name is Eunice," replied grandfather; "that is your grandmother's name."

"Yes," nodded the little girl, "but nobody ever calls me Eunice. Everybody always calls me 'Lamb.'"

"Well, well," said grandpa. "'Sister' and 'Lamb.' I don't know how your grandmother will like that, I'm sure."

"Do you like it, grandpa?" asked Constance; "because, if you'd rather call us by our grown-up names why we won't care, will we, Lamb?"

"N-o-o," responded Lamb slowly, "only it would seem more like home to be called 'Lamb.'"

"Then that is all settled," said grandfather. "You see I'm right between a Lion and a Lamb, for this horse's name is Lion."

"Can we learn to drive him?" asked Constance eagerly.

"I shouldn't wonder if you could. Perhaps when spring comes I might look about and find a nice pony for you to drive."

"But we will be home when spring comes," Lamb



reminded him, and then grandpa gave the reins a slap, and the horse went even faster than before.

Grandma had heard the sleigh bells, and when they drove into the yard and grandfather called out "Whoa," she was at the door and ran out to the sleigh before grandpa could get the buffaloes untucked.

"Dear Constance and Eunice," she said, as each of the little girls put her arms around her neck and kissed her warmly, "grandma is so glad to see you. Hurry right into the house out of the cold," and with an arm about each she hurried them up the steps and into the bright kitchen.

"Now let me have a good look at you," she said smilingly, as the little girls pulled off their warm mittens and began unfastening their heavy coats. "This is Eunice, I know," giving the smaller of the two girls an extra kiss.

"We call her 'Lamb,'" said Constance.

"And we call Constance 'Sister,'" said Lamb, smiling at her grandmother's look of surprise.

"Well, I declare," said grandma, helping them off with their things.

The table was spread for supper, the teakettle was making a cheerful humming noise on the shining stove, and in a big rocking-chair were two Maltese kittens who seemed to be watching the new arrivals with great interest.

"Oh, Lamb!" said Constance, pointing at the kittens.

*Grandpa's Little Girls*

"Your grandfather brought those kittens home from the village last week," explained grandma smilingly. "He said that little girls were sure to like kittens."

"Oh, yes," said Constance eagerly.

In a moment grandpa came in from the barn. "I don't even know how these chicks look," he said. "So your name is 'Lamb,' eh?" and he chuckled as he looked at the little girl's shining black eyes, red cheeks, and dark curling hair. "Well, I don't believe the name suits her a bit, do you, mother? But I guess 'Sister' is all right for this one," and he patted Sister's brown head and nodded approvingly.

The little girls were hungry and tired, and as soon as supper was over they were quite ready to go upstairs to bed. Their chamber was nice and warm. There was a bright fire in the Franklin stove, the soft blankets were turned back, and when they felt the soft feather-bed all about them and after grandma kissed them good-night they did not stay awake long, even to talk about the kittens, or their journey, or anything else, but were fast asleep before they realized that they were really at Grandpa Neuman's.

"Nice little girls as ever I saw," said grandpa, when grandmother came back to the kitchen; "now we must do everything we can to make them contented, and perhaps they will both want to live with us."

"I don't believe Henry would consent to that," said grandmother, "and we must look out, Jabez, and not

spoil them. It won't do to be too indulgent, you know," and Grandma Neuman tried to look very firm.

Grandfather chuckled and pulled his big rocking-chair a little nearer the stove. "It won't be me that will do the spoiling," he said, "and I think that we are going to take a sight of comfort with 'em."

"Why, of course!" replied grandmother, "and, while I don't favor nicknames as a rule, still I suppose we might as well call them 'Sister' and 'Lamb' for a while."

"Why, yes," said grandfather, "I don't see any objection to such soft-sounding names as those, I'm sure," and the two old people smiled at each other happily.

## CHAPTER II

### "SISTER PETER"

CONSTANCE was the first to wake up the next morning. A little rattle about the stove, then a brisk crackling sound made the little girl lift her head from the warm pillow and look about the room ; and she saw Grandfather Neuman on his knees in front of the little stove putting in small round sticks of birch wood, and in the doorway stood grandmother.

"There, Jabez, you've woke them up," said grandma.

"Well, well," said grandpa, "it's high time. Nigh on to seven," and he got up from his knees and came over to the bed and kissed Constance.

"Lamb hasn't woke up," said Constance. "I always have to poke her and shake her."

"But you mustn't, dear child," exclaimed grandmother. "Let her sleep."

"But she has to get up," said the elder girl. "Will we go to school here, grandmother?"

"We'll have to see about school, I suppose," said grandmother, with a little sigh ; for really Grandmother Neuman did not care much about schools. She would have liked much better to have had the little girls stay at home all day with her than to have them go to school.

"Of course, they must go to school," said grandfather, and while grandma stayed to help Constance dress, he went back to the kitchen.

"Aren't you going to wake Lamb up?" asked Constance, when she was all dressed and ready to go down-stairs.

"No, dear," said grandma, "not while she sleeps like that. It will do her good."

"You mustn't spoil us," said Constance seriously; "mamma said that was the only thing she dreaded about letting us come here. She was afraid you'd spoil us. Don't you think it is spoiling Lamb to let her sleep this way?" and she looked toward the bed where she could just see a wisp of black hair on the pillow.

"Well! I never!" said grandma, a little glow of color coming into her wrinkled cheeks. "I intend to be very firm with you children. Perhaps Lamb had ought to get up," and grandma went softly over to the bed and put her hand on the dark head and said, "Wake up, dear," so softly that it would hardly have disturbed a robin.

"She won't wake up for that," said Constance scornfully, and giving her sister a vigorous shake she called loudly: "Lamb Neuman, wake up!"

Lamb turned sleepily, opened her eyes and looked about.

"Oh, this is my dear grandmother," she said, and from that moment there was no doubt in Grandma

Neuman's heart which little granddaughter it was that she wanted to keep for her own little girl. Then Lamb turned her face to the pillow again, and grandma, with a soft "ssh" to Constance, led the unwilling sister toward the stairway. "We'll let her sleep," she whispered; "you know she's nearly two years younger than you are."

When Constance got to the kitchen she really felt sorry for Lamb. For the Maltese kittens were rolling each other over and over on the rug in front of the fire, and close beside the big chair was a big shepherd dog, who got up and came forward as if to welcome the newcomer.

"This is Shep," said grandma, "he doesn't stay in the house much except on very cold days, but he's going to visit us to-day to get acquainted with you and with the kittens."

Shep walked around Constance, and she patted his handsome head, and then put both arms about his neck, and grandma looked on approvingly. He did not notice the kittens at all, and they were so busy rolling over each other that they did not pay any attention to the big dog.

"Your grandfather and I have had our breakfast," said grandmother. "After this morning we will all have breakfast together; but I wanted you to get well rested from your journey. This is your place," and grandma pointed to one side of the table where there was a plate with pink roses all around the edge,



and a bowl all covered, inside and out, with pink roses.

"And this is Lamb's place," she continued, pointing to a pretty blue plate and blue bowl. "Now sit right up to the table, dear."

Just then they heard some one running down-stairs and in came Lamb.

"Why, I meant to come up and help you dress, Lamb," said grandma.

"Why, grandmother," said Constance, "we can do everything for ourselves. Mother said that she shouldn't think of letting us come for such a long visit if we were going to be a trouble to you."

"Oh!" said grandmother, and it seemed to Constance just as if her grandma was disappointed.

"Did you want to help us?" continued Constance, but before grandma could answer Lamb exclaimed: "Oh, look, right here on my spoon is 'Eunice.' Why, it is for me, isn't it, grandmother?"

"Oh!" echoed Constance, "and my name is right on this spoon."

Grandma smiled happily at their surprise. "You must thank grandfather for those," she said; "he bought them in Ellsworth just as soon as we were sure that you were coming."

"And can we take them when we go home?" asked Lamb.

"You must think of this as home!" said grandma, and when neither of the little girls made any response

she began to fear that perhaps her plan for keeping them with her always might not be successful. She and grandfather had talked about it a great deal. "It isn't as if Henry had a business that kept him in one place," grandpa had said, "but he is moving about here and there, and the little girls ought to have a settled home. If they lived with us then Henry and his wife would feel safe about them, and could come home to see them as often as Henry's business would admit."

"Yes, indeed," grandma had replied, "children need a real home, especially little girls. We must try and make them so happy here that they will want to stay."

"But we must not spoil them," grandfather had added soberly.

So when Lamb spoke of taking away her spoon grandmother made a rash resolve. "A little spoiling never hurt any nice child," she thought. "Yes, indeed, dear," she replied, "but if you stay with grandma I shall give you each a silver spoon every birthday and every Christmas."

"And will you put 'Lamb' on mine?" "And 'Sister' on mine?" exclaimed the little girls.

"Yes, I will," said grandmother.

"Well, well," said a deep voice from the door, and there stood Grandfather Neuman. "Why," said he, "I expected these girls would have their leggings and hoods all on and be ready to go out to the sheep barn with me, and take a look at old Lion, and see the cows

and the hens. You don't know what a lot of things we have here, do they, grandma?"

The little girls soon finished their breakfasts and were ready to go out. Shep jumped about them with joyful little barks as if he thought the excursion was wholly for his pleasure; and the kittens followed as far as the door, but when a flurry of snow blew in they jumped back and ran under the stove.

Constance took fast hold of one of grandfather's mittened hands and Lamb grasped the other, while Shep ran here and there delighted to be out-of-doors again.

"I'd like to run just the way Shep does," said Lamb.

"Of course you would," said grandpa; "run along."

And Lamb started after the big dog. Shep was very sure now that this was a game, so he leaped against Lamb with such force that the little girl rolled over in the snow and grandpa had to run and pick her up. Then Lamb pushed Shep over, which surprised him so much that he walked along quite soberly until they reached the big barn. Then grandpa said that Shep must wait outside until they came back. But the dog lay down just inside the door, and looked up as if to say that he preferred to be indoors, so grandpa said "All right, Shep," and they went on without him.

All along on each side of the barn were stalls, and from each opening looked out the big-eyed Jersey cows.

Constance began to count on one side and Lamb

counted on the other. "Seven!" they each exclaimed as they reached the end of the barn. Over the stalls were big mows of hay and a man was forking down hay into the mangers in front of the cows.

"Come down, Eben," said grandfather, "I want to make you acquainted with Henry's little girls." And in a moment the man came down the ladder which rested against the stacks of hay.

"This is Constance, and this is Eunice," said grandfather, "and this is Mr. Eben Bean, who lives in the brown house across the road and helps me take care of the place."

When the little girls looked at their new acquaintance they thought that they had never seen such a very tall man. He had grayish chin-whiskers, and when he shook hands with Lamb she said, "Why, I know just who you look like."

"Who?" asked Eben, with a wide smile.

"Oh, I know, too," exclaimed Sister, "you look just like 'Uncle Sam.'"

"That's what everybody says," responded Mr. Bean, drawing himself up until he looked even taller than before; "you girls ain't the first that's noticed it. I don't feel too sot up over it, but I reckon it's something to be proud of to resemble the United States government."

"Oh, yes, indeed!" said Lamb, looking at him admiringly. "I wish I could grow as tall as you are, Mr. Bean."

"Do you? Well, perhaps you will. My daughter, Abitha, who keeps house for me, is pretty nigh as tall."

"I suppose she's grown up?" continued Lamb.

Mr. Bean chuckled. "I guess she's got her full growth," he answered; "she's nigh forty, and stands full six feet."

While the children were making the acquaintance of Mr. Bean and looking at all the wonderful things in the barns, grandma had been very busy. She had cleared away and washed the dishes. She had made up the beds and put the rooms in order, prepared a roast of lamb for the oven, and before the children came in the morning's work was nearly accomplished.

"I must teach Constance to take care of their room," she thought, as she put some wood and shavings in the little Franklin stove all ready to light later on. "I must teach them to grow up useful women or they will never be happy."

"This afternoon," said grandpa, as they stopped in the shed to brush the snow from their feet, "you and grandma must go over and see Miss Abitha. Perhaps she will show you the dairy. She takes care of all the milk, and she is very proud of Pine Tree farm milk."

"Is this Pine Tree Farm?" asked Constance.

"Of course it is," answered grandpa. "Look at that!" and he pointed toward a dark line of trees back of the barns. "Those are pine trees, and this is the State of Maine, so it is Pine Tree farm."

"I think we are going to have a lovely visit," said Lamb as they went into the house; "don't you, Sister?"

Constance nodded. "But they don't call me 'Sister,'" she whispered, "and if they don't begin to-morrow I guess I shall write mother that I want to come to California right away."

This made Lamb look very sober. "Perhaps it is because you seem so grown-up that they think you won't like baby names," said Lamb.

Constance's face brightened. "Perhaps so," she answered, "for they call you 'Lamb' all the time."

"Now," said grandfather, when they had finished dinner, "I must step out in the shed and saw some wood. If one of you girls was only a boy I should say 'Come on, Peter, and help your grandpa.'"

"Do you wish one of us was a boy?" asked Constance.

Grandfather looked at her smilingly. "Well," he answered, "I suppose if I'd had my choice you would have been a boy."

"Can't girls saw wood?" asked Constance.

"I don't see why they couldn't if they wanted to," chuckled grandpa.

"And should you call me Peter if I was a boy?" continued Constance.

Grandpa nodded, "I expect I should."

Constance's face brightened. "Oh, goody!" she exclaimed, "then play I was your boy and call me Peter and let me learn to saw wood."



"And what will Lamb do?" asked grandfather.

"She can be grandmother's girl and help in the house," said Constance.

"Well, I declare," exclaimed grandmother looking over her glasses, "I don't know, Jabez, but what their mother would think we were going to work the right way to spoil them."

"Nonsense, nonsense," said Mr. Neuman; "nobody was ever spoiled by sawing wood, were they, Peter?"

"Peter" giggled happily. She began now to feel really at home. "Can I go right out in the woodshed with you now, grandpa?"

"Yes, sir," said grandpa. "We will have to make a small sawhorse and fix a little saw for the new boy, and we'll leave the women folks to clear up." So Constance got her warm hood and second-best jacket and followed grandfather out into the shed.

"Now what will I do, grandma?" asked Lamb.

"Bless your heart! You can just be company for me," said grandmother. "I haven't a thing to do but wash up these dishes, brush up a little, and stir a few custards for tea. You just play with the kittens till grandma is ready to sit down and then we will start up a fire in the sitting-room and see what we can find in the sitting-room closet." So Lamb sat down on the braided rug and the two Maltese kittens instantly jumped over her feet and began to play.

"What shall I call the kitties, grandma?" asked

Lamb. "They ought to have some other name than just 'kittens.'"

"Ought they?" asked grandmother, stopping on her way to the pantry.

"Why, of course!" said Lamb; "it's just the same as if you called Sister and me 'children.'"

"Well, now, perhaps it is," said grandmother thoughtfully. "You just think up some nice names for them."

"And you, too, grandmother. You think up some nice names," urged Lamb.

"Well, how would 'Puss' do for one and 'Kitty' for the other?" said grandmother.

"Oh, Grandmother Neuman! That's just the same as 'kittens.' No, they must have pretty names. Now I think this one ought to be called 'Fluff,' for his fur is so soft and fluffy."

"Why, of course!" said grandma admiringly, "that is just the right name for him."

"And this one," said Lamb, reaching after the kitten whose neck was as white as a kitten's neck could be, "what can we call this one, grandma?"

Grandmother shook her head. "I can't think of a single name except 'Puss,'" she said.

"We might call it 'Puff,'" said the little girl thoughtfully; "but I don't like that very well."

"No," said grandmother, "that isn't so pretty a name as 'Fluff.' Why don't you call it 'Blossom'?"

"That's lovely!" exclaimed Lamb, so the kittens

were named "Fluff" and "Blossom," and when Lamb went into the sitting-room they jumped and skipped along beside her.

The sitting-room was separated from the kitchen by a narrow passageway. It was a large sunny room facing the road that led to the village. As Lamb ran to look out one of the front windows she exclaimed:

"Oh, grandmother, is that Miss Abitha Bean?"

A very tall woman with a brown hood, and a long shawl over her shoulders was coming up the path.

"Why, yes, indeed," said grandmother, hurrying to open the front door, "that is Abitha."

## CHAPTER III

### THE TOP SHELF

MISS ABITHA looked so much like her father that Lamb whispered to herself "Mrs. Uncle Sam." She did not mean that their visitor should hear, but Miss Abitha nodded at her smilingly, and said, "I know just what this little girl is thinking; she is thinking that I look just like the Mrs. Uncle Sam. You see I used to teach school a few years ago so that I know just what little girls think."

"I hope I will be tall, as tall as you are, when I get my growth," said Lamb.

"Do you? Well, you are a dear child, and I have no doubt but you will be of an excellent height," responded Miss Abitha, with a little nod, and she looked at Lamb approvingly.

Lamb noticed two doors on the further side of the room and felt quite sure that one of them was the door to the closet of which grandma had spoken, but she played happily with "Fluff" and "Blossom" while Grandmother Neuman told their visitor that Constance was out in the woodshed helping grandfather, and that he was going to call her "Peter."

This made Miss Abitha laugh. It seemed to Lamb

that Miss Abitha laughed at everything, and she was sure that she should like her.

"I begin to think that I would like to teach school again," said Miss Abitha; "if father had a real good housekeeper and I was ten years younger I should look out for a school," and Miss Abitha laughed again; "but I guess it would be to make sure of young company."

"There!" exclaimed grandmother, "I don't see why I didn't think of it before, Abitha! Here Jabez and I have been worrying about having to send these children way over to the village to school, and a school teacher right next door to us. Why can't Sister and Lamb say their lessons to you? We'd be willing to pay whatever you thought was right!"

"I could just as well as not," agreed Miss Abitha, "and I'd admire to. I couldn't keep school mornings because I have the milk to attend to. But from one to four is long enough for children of their age to study, and Peter and Lamb can come over to my house every afternoon and we'll have a real good time."

"Except Saturdays," said Lamb.

"Saturdays we will have the best time of all," laughed Miss Abitha; "we will have picnics Saturdays."

"But you can't have picnics in the winter," said Lamb.

"Now that shows that you have never had a real



good time," said Miss Abitha, "for winter picnics are the very best picnics of all, and if my scholars do as well as I expect them to I shall take them on a picnic the very first Saturday."

"Oh, grandmother," said Lamb, jumping up from the rug so suddenly that both Fluff and Blossom fell over, "when can we begin to go to school? Can we begin to-morrow?"

"Not to-morrow, dear," said grandma, "to-morrow is Wednesday. You can begin next Monday. There, Abitha," continued grandmother turning to her neighbor, "I'm just as grateful to you as I can be. I don't know of anything that could please me as much as to have Sister and Lamb right within call, and not have to send them way over to the village."

"I shall enjoy it. At least I think I shall," and Miss Abitha laughed again. "Well, I must be going home now. Bring Sister Peter over to see me to-morrow," and picking up her warm shawl Miss Abitha started for home.

Lamb ran to the window to watch her, and to wave her hand when Miss Abitha turned at the gate.

"I think she's lovely!" said Lamb, "don't you, grandma?"

"She is an excellent neighbor," said grandmother; "and she's a good teacher. Now shall we see what is in the closet, or shall we wait until Sister and grandpa come in?"

"Couldn't we see now and then surprise Sister when she comes in?" said Lamb.

"Why, I suppose we could," agreed grandmother, "but I must bring a chair in from the kitchen to stand on, because the things I want are on the top shelf." So grandmother stepped out to the kitchen and returned with a wooden chair. Then she opened one of the doors which Lamb had noticed and Lamb looked in.

"Oh! grandmother!" she exclaimed, "the things are right here on the lower shelf," for as the door swung open Lamb could see two big dolls exactly alike, sitting on the lower shelf. One doll had a card pinned on her dress with "Eunice" written on it, and on the other doll was a card with "Constance."

"Grandmother," said Lamb soberly, "let's shut the closet door right up. Sister ought to see too."

"I guess she had, and you are a dear child to think of it," said grandmother, "so let's go out in the shed and get grandfather and his 'boy' to come in."

"I can't think what there can be on the top shelf," said Lamb.

When they reached the woodshed Grandfather Neuman and "Peter" were very busy. Grandpa had made the nicest little saw-horse! It was just high enough for "Peter" to put her foot up on the small round sticks of birch wood to hold them in place while she sawed off short sticks for the bedroom

stove. But grandpa had not got her little saw ready yet. The saw blade lay on his work bench, and he was making a wooden frame for it; and while he worked on this "Peter" was piling up wood in neat rows.

"Grandfather says I'm just as good as a boy," she said proudly. But Lamb could not wait to look at the tiers of wood or the saw-horse. "Oh, Sister!" she exclaimed, "do come right into the house. Grandmother has a sitting-room, and there's a closet"—Lamb stopped for she wanted to surprise her sister. "Do come, now, Sister," she urged, pulling at Constance's dress.

"Run along, Peter," said grandpa, looking up from his work. "I know all about that closet."

"But you must come, too, Jabez," said grandmother.

"Well, I believe I will," said grandfather, so they all went back to the sitting-room.

"You can open the door, Lamb," said grandmother. So Lamb opened the door.

"Dolls!" exclaimed Constance, and she came near enough to read the names on the cards, "and they are for us, Lamb!"

"Look!" exclaimed Lamb, "see what there is each side of the dolls."

"Trunks!" exclaimed Constance, "real doll's trunks with a key!" The two little girls looked at each other with delighted smiles while grandmother



"THEY ARE FOR US," SHE EXCLAIMED



and grandfather nodded happily to each other. Then grandmother handed one doll to Constance and the other to Lamb, and grandfather lifted the trunks from the shelf. He made believe that the trunks were so heavy that he could hardly carry them over to the wide black hair-cloth sofa. The little girls ran after him and when they found that each trunk was marked, one "Constance" and one "Eunice," in small black letters they exclaimed again.

"Well, I guess I've lost Peter," said grandfather. "I don't see any signs of a boy round here, do you, grandmother?"

"I'll be Peter to-morrow," said Constance. "Just as soon as the saw is ready I'll be Peter."

"All right," said grandfather, "then I'll step back to the shed and finish the saw."

The little girls were so busy unpacking the trunks, and Lamb telling her sister about Miss Abitha's visit and the plan for them to go to school that they quite forgot about the top-shelf in the closet, and not until supper was ready and grandmother came in after the kitchen chair did Lamb remember it. Then she exclaimed: "Oh, grandmother! The top shelf!"

"Why, sure enough!" said grandmother, "I forgot all about it."

"Well," said Constance, "it seems to me we ought to save something for some other day. Look at all the things we have seen to-day. And these beautiful



dolls, and their trunks full of clothes, and these kittens, and everything. Why!" said the little girl, with a long sigh, "I've had such a lovely time and I have so many things to think about that I don't dare to think about top shelves."

"That's a good idea, Peter," said grandfather.

"I've had the loveliest time I ever had in my life," said Lamb, "and if my mother and father would come here I'd like to live here all my life, wouldn't you, Sister?"

Sister had just taken a spoonful of strawberry preserves, so she could not speak, but she nodded her head so vigorously that her smooth brown hair seemed to dance all about her face, and when Grandmother and Grandfather Newman looked at the two happy children, they, too, began to smile happily.

"Now, Jabez," said grandmother. "we ~~must~~ must be very careful and not indulge the children too much. That wouldn't be doing right by their parents."

"That is so," said grandfather. "I shall be very firm with Peter. I shall expect Peter to saw wood, and feed the chickens; and when spring comes Peter will have to help garden. Peter is going to be a great deal of help to me," and grandfather helped Constance to another spoonful of the strawberry preserves.

"Can't I have a garden, too, grandpa?" asked Lamb.

"Of course, you can. But as you are the girl of the family you will have to have an ornamental garden,

all pinks and roses and mignonette, while Peter will plant cabbages and turnips and onions."

"Isn't it lovely to be here?" said Lamb. "But oh, grandpa! Perhaps we can't stay till garden time!"

"We'll manage to have you stay just as long as you want to," responded grandfather.

When the two little girls went up-stairs to bed that night each one carried her doll; and when grandmother opened the bedroom door they both exclaimed. For right beside their own bed was another tiny bedstead, with pillows and blankets exactly like a "grown-up" bed, Lamb said. And on this bed lay two tiny night-dresses.

"I guess we shall wake up," said Constance; "for so many lovely things happen just as they do when you dream." Grandma helped undress the dolls and tucked them carefully in the small bed; and as Sister and Lamb crept under their own blankets Lamb whispered, "Sister, what do you suppose is on that top shelf?"

"I can't guess," replied Constance, "and don't you ask, Lamb, because it wouldn't be polite."

"And, Sister," continued Lamb, "what do you suppose 'winter picnics' are? Miss Abitha says that we don't know what a real good time is until we have been on a 'winter picnic.'" Constance made no response and Lamb went on, "And, Sister, we haven't named our lovely dolls yet. What will we name our

dolls? Don't you wish that father and mother would come and live in this lovely——" and the little girl's voice trailed off into silence. Both Sister and Lamb were fast asleep.

## CHAPTER IV

### "PETER" MAKES A RESOLVE

THE remainder of that week went so rapidly that, while the top shelf remained a delightful mystery, neither Lamb nor Constance had much time to think about the sitting-room closet. Grandmother Neuman suggested that perhaps it would be a good plan to keep the closet for rainy days. "A shelf for every stormy day," she said, and the little girls agreed. But there were so many things to do, and so much to see, and they were so happy that they did not think much about it. The dolls had been named. Miss Abitha came over to see them and said at once that one of them ought to be named "Jabezza," and both Lamb and Constance were delighted with such a new name for a doll, and grandfather said that he should be proud indeed to give his name to such a handsome, well-behaved young lady as Constance's doll. Then Miss Abitha lifted up the other doll and said, "Now this doll needs a different kind of a name. She looks exactly like Jabezza, but I can see that her disposition is entirely different. She wouldn't like such a distinguished name. I should call her 'Betty.'"

"Oh," said Lamb, "I shall be so glad when Monday

comes so we can go to school to you, Miss Abitha. I know you will teach us the loveliest things."

Grandpa had finished the little saw and every day "Peter" hurried out in the shed to help grandfather. He was making a little work bench especially for "Peter." And was going to teach the "new boy" to make nice little boxes.

"They are to fit all together without any nails or pegs or anything," Constance announced proudly. "I will make a lovely box for you, Lamb," she added, "and you can keep all the letters we get from mother and father in it."

Grandmother heard Constance speak of her mother and father. "I do hope those children are not homesick, Jabez," she said anxiously; "perhaps we ought to talk to them more about their father and mother, and tell them that we want them all to feel that this is their real home."

"They can't be homesick," responded Grandfather Neuman. "Why they haven't half seen the farm yet; and Peter is so interested in that work bench that I don't believe you could hire her to think of going away."

"I hope they will be contented, I'm sure," said grandmother. "I guess I'll make some of those raisin cookies that their father used to like;" and she hurried back to the kitchen just as Sister and Lamb came running into the shed.

Lamb turned and went back with her grandmother.

"Grandma," she began, "I s'pose little girls, as little as me, can learn to do things, can't they?"

"Why, yes, indeed!" replied grandma.

Lamb gave a little skip of delight and got fast hold of her grandmother's hand.

"Then, grandma, will you, oh, will you teach me to cook?"

"Of course I will," said grandmother. "I'll begin right now, this very afternoon, on raisin cookies such as your father used to like when he was a little boy."

"Goody," exclaimed Lamb, and in a few moments grandmother had tied a long apron around the little girl's neck, and she was standing close to the table where grandma was measuring out sugar and flour and spices.

"You just pull a chair up here, my dear," said grandmother, "and then you can stone the raisins for me while I mix up the batter."

"Oh, yes!" said Lamb, and the chair was drawn close to the table and the little girl climbed into it. Grandmother put a round wooden bowl in her lap, put the bag of raisins on the table beside her, and showed her how to press out the seeds.

The little girl worked quietly for several minutes, then she said, "Grandma, I s'pose there are little girls who don't have any grandmothers and grandfathers?"

"Why, yes, my dear, I suppose so," responded Mrs. Neuman. A long sigh came from under the big apron.



"Well," said Lamb, "I'm awfully sorry for those poor little girls, grandmother."

"What made you think that you wanted to learn to cook, Lamb?" questioned Mrs. Neuman.

Lamb looked up smilingly. "Why, if Sister is going to be such a help to grandpa, sawing wood and everything, I want to be a help to you. Because," and Lamb waited to pick out a fat raisin and eat it, "because if you don't like me as well as Sister—why, when spring comes and our visit is over you might want her to stay longer and not want me to. But if both of us are a real help, why, then you'll want us both."

Grandmother stopped stirring up the fragrant mass and leaned over and kissed Lamb. "We want you both anyway," she responded.

Out in the shed grandfather and "Peter" were very busy. "Peter's" long hair got in her way sometimes when she bent over the bench. "I never saw a boy with such long hair as yours, Peter," declared grandfather. "I suppose little Chinese boys and Indian boys have long hair, though," he continued thoughtfully.

Constance looked at him a little anxiously. All that day she had been wondering if there was not some special thing that she could do to please her grandfather, and now here was the very thing! She smiled happily to herself. If her hair was short of course she would seem more like a real "Peter" to

her grandfather. He was so good that he wouldn't ask her to cut it off, she thought, but if she should do it and surprise him, then he would see that she really meant to do as he wished. She resolved that some way she would cut off those smooth brown locks. She wondered how her father had looked when he was a little boy.

"Grandfather!" she exclaimed, laying down the little hammer so suddenly that it fell to the floor, "when my father was a little boy did he look just like me?"

Grandfather Neuman rested on his saw and looked at the little girl.

"Well," he responded, "I can see a likeness. Yes, Peter, if you had short hair and wore trousers and a little roundabout jacket, and had on a cap and good stout boots, I guess you'd look considerably as your father used to."

Constance smiled so happily that Grandfather Neuman began to wonder if a girl who wanted so much to look like her father would be contented to live with a grandfather.

"I s'pose my father wore out all his clothes when he was my age, didn't he?" continued Constance.

"He didn't wear things out so fast as he outgrew them," said Mr. Neuman. "Your father shot up like a young poplar. Why, your grandmother's got a whole box of things that Henry used to wear. Every spring and fall the clothes-line is full of boys' clothes.

She gets them out then to see that moths don't get in them. You'd think we had a family of boys by the looks of the place then," chuckled grandfather.

Constance had listened hopefully. A whole box full of boys' clothes! It was almost too good to be true, she thought. "Now it will be all my own fault," she said to herself, "if I don't make myself into a real boy," and she picked up the hammer and grandfather began to saw wood again.

But that evening, after the little girls had gone upstairs to bed, Mr. and Mrs. Neuman looked at each other with troubled eyes.

"I'm almost afraid that you are right, Eunice," said grandfather. "Peter was talking about her father this afternoon. Wanted to know if she looked like him, and all that. I'm afraid it's just as you said, that they are getting homesick," and grandfather sighed.

"Well," said grandmother, taking up her knitting-work, "we won't cross any bridges yet a while, Jabez. When I spoke to them about gardens they seemed real pleased. And if we can keep them happy through the winter and into the garden season, and if they begin writing to Henry what good times they are having, and how they wished they could live here always, why, then I shall feel quite safe," and grandmother smiled hopefully.

"Then Henry might take time to come home for a visit, and decide that this was a good place to live, after all," said grandfather; and the two elderly peo-

ple looked at each other with little nods of satisfaction.

"I think Abitha will get them real interested in their lessons," ventured grandmother. "She has been telling them about winter picnics and all sorts of things. They can hardly wait for Monday to come."

"You tell Abitha to talk to them about how nice it is here when summer comes," said grandfather; "tell her to be sure and say that we have the biggest and sweetest strawberries in the whole township. And I'll begin to look up a pony. I tell you what it is, Eunice," and Mr. Neuman brought his hand down on the arm of his big chair with so much force that the chair creaked in disapproval, "I tell you what, I want these little girls to live right here, and grow up here, well and happy."

"So do I, Jabez," responded grandmother; "but we mustn't spoil them."

If they could have peeped into the up-stairs chamber, where the girls were whispering to each other under the warm blankets, and heard the conversation, they would have understood why Constance had asked so many questions about her father and her resemblance to him.

"Oh, Lamb," she whispered, "I've got a lovely plan to surprise grandfather."

"Goody!" responded Lamb; "what is it?"

"You won't tell grandmother or Miss Abitha, and you'll help me?" questioned Constance.

"Yes," answered Lamb eagerly.

"Well," said Constance, "if I'm going to be a boy it's perfectly silly for me to have such long hair. So I'm going to cut off my hair. Perhaps I'll do it to-morrow if I can get grandma's scissors; and when grandfather sees that I have short hair he'll be just as pleased."

"Will he?" asked Lamb, a little doubtfully.

"Why, of course he will. He was saying to-day that he never saw a boy with hair as long as mine. I suppose he didn't want to ask me to cut it off, but when he sees that I cut it off all by myself he will be just as glad as can be."

"Is that all to the surprise?" asked Lamb.

"No. That's just the first part. Grandmother has a lot of clothes that father used to wear when he was little, and grandpa said to-day that if I was dressed up in boy's clothes I'd look just as father used to look."

"Oh, did he, Sister! Then you must get them right away. You know mother said that we must do everything we could to please grandfather. Shall you ask grandmother to give them to you?"

"Lamb Eunice Neuman," exclaimed Constance, "didn't I just tell you that I wanted to surprise grandpa? Of course I shan't ask grandmother. I'll just find out where the box is and get them."

"Couldn't I dress up, too?" asked Lamb.

"No, Lamb," responded Constance, "they want one girl, you know. Grandfather said that if one of us

had been a boy. And you ought to be glad that you can stay a girl. You must help grandmother."

"When are you going to dress up, Sister?" asked Lamb, sleepily.

"I'll tell you just as soon as I know myself," replied Sister.

"I hope there'll be a stormy day pretty soon," murmured Lamb, "so we can see another shelf in the sitting-room closet."

Monday morning came bright and pleasant, and Constance still wore her hair long. But she resolved that before it was time to go over to Miss Abitha's and begin lessons that grandfather should see that "Peter" was doing her best. So she hunted up grandmother's scissors and, while grandfather was busy in the barns helping Eben, she ran out in the shed and seated herself on the little work-bench. Snip! went the scissors, and a soft, heavy tress of the brown hair fell to the floor. Snip, snip, the scissors worked fast now and the brown locks fell like feathers on the floor around the bench. It did not take very long. When Constance could not find enough hair to get hold of she felt that her work was completed, and she started back to the kitchen without thinking to gather up her shorn tresses.

As she opened the kitchen door Grandmother Neuman had just taken a big pumpkin pie from the oven. She looked up and there in the door stood Constance, scissors in hand.



"My soul," exclaimed grandmother nearly dropping the pie. "My soul, child. What has happened to you?" and grandmother trembled so that she hurried to set the pie down on a chair, for fear that she would drop it before she could reach the table.

Constance did not realize how the snipping scissors had accomplished their work. She had cut off her front hair so closely that only a little brush-like growth remained. Further back on her head she could not reach as well, and there it was several inches long. In the back it was a series of points and scallops.

"Oh, you poor child. Tell grandmother what has happened," and Mrs. Neuman hurried across the room and put her arm about Peter, and ran a tender hand over the shorn head.

"I cut off my hair," said Constance, a little abashed by this unexpected sympathy. "Boys don't have long hair, grandmother," she continued, "and grandfather will be real pleased when he sees that I've got short hair just like a boy."

"I never heard the beat," declared grandmother. "You are a sight! I don't know what Miss Abitha will say, I'm sure. You just run in the sitting-room and look in the mirror and see how you look."

"Don't you like it, grandmother?" A little quiver sounded in Constance's voice, and just at that moment grandfather and Lamb came in.

"Oh!" said Lamb, noticing her sister's head. "Oh,

Sister, you have done it, haven't you?" she exclaimed.

"I should say she had," groaned grandmother.

Grandfather looked at the cropped little head; he noticed the scissors in one hand, and he noticed, too, that there were tears in the pretty brown eyes.

"Well, Peter," he exclaimed, lifting Constance up from the floor and giving her a kiss, "boys don't wear long hair, do they? No, sir! So you cut it off, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes, grandfather," sobbed Constance, dropping the scissors, and putting both arms tight around his neck.

"It looks just like a boy's head, don't it, grandmother?" said Lamb admiringly.

"It doesn't look like anything I ever saw before," said grandmother, and, forgetting the pumpkin pie, she sat down on the chair near the stove, only to rise suddenly with another exclamation of "Goodness! If I haven't sat right down on that pumpkin pie!"

Grandfather and Constance and Lamb began to laugh as grandmother hurried away to change her dress, and Constance began to feel that everything was all right after all.

"You like my hair short, don't you, grandfather?" she asked, and grandfather answered, "Of course I do, Peter."

## CHAPTER V

### MISS ABITHA'S SCHOOL

It was exactly one o'clock when Constance and Lamb rapped at Miss Abitha's front door. They did not have to wait a moment, for the door swung open and Miss Abitha's smiling face welcomed them.

"Come right in, young ladies," she said, "and hang your things right here in the entry. School is all ready to begin."

Constance rather dreaded taking off her hood. Grandmother Neuman had clipped and trimmed the shorn head until now it looked, Lamb assured her, "exactly like a boy's head." But some way Constance was not as happy about it as she had expected to be, and she was afraid that Miss Abitha would exclaim as soon as her hood was off. But it was not until they entered Miss Abitha's sitting-room that Miss Abitha seemed to notice the change. Then she said with a little laugh, "Well, so it really is Peter, short hair and all. You look just like your father, my dear, or you would if you had on boy's clothes."

This made Constance very happy. She felt that she had really made a step in the right direction, and resolved to find out where that box of boy's clothes was as soon as she possibly could.

There were two small tables in the room facing a cheerful open fire. On the wall hung a big brightly colored map. Constance and Lamb seated themselves in the low chairs beside the tables, and looked at Miss Abitha expectantly. She had sat down in a comfortable rocker near an old-fashioned desk and had taken up a small book. "Young ladies," she said, "for the opening exercises of this term of school I shall read you 'John Gilpin's Ride.' It was written by William Cowper, who was the most popular poet of his generation, and he was born in 1731, in England. Now you must remember that because it is part of your lesson."

"Perhaps we had better write it down?" suggested Constance, looking at a new pencil and a nice block of white paper which lay on the table beside her.

"Why, yes," said Miss Abitha, as though pleasantly surprised at her pupil's suggestion, "I think that would be an excellent plan."

Miss Abitha read well, and the little girls laughed heartily over Gilpin's adventures.

"Now," said Miss Abitha rising and approaching the big map, "I wonder if you know what a big country you live in. Here is Maine way down in this corner, with Pine Tree farm about in the middle of it. And way over here is California."

"That's where mother and father are," said Lamb.

Miss Abitha nodded. "Yes," she said; "now do you know how far off that is? It is nearly four thousand miles."

"Had we better write that down?" asked Constance.

"Yes," said Miss Abitha, and she pointed out the different states that Mr. and Mrs. Henry Neuman would travel through to reach their destination. Miss Abitha had so many interesting things to tell them that it was four o'clock before they realized it. And their teacher rang a little bell which stood on her desk to show that school was dismissed, and handed each of her pupils an envelope addressed just as a letter would be.

"You can open those when you get home," she said, "and bring me answers to-morrow."

"Are they real letters?" asked Lamb.

"Why, yes, I think so," laughed Miss Abitha; "but why didn't you bring Jabezza and Betty?" she asked.

"Oh, can we, Miss Abitha?" said Lamb.

"Certainly," replied Miss Abitha, "and it will be more interesting for them if we have a lesson about the doll family. You know the doll family are very important people. You tell Jabezza and Betty that I will look up some pictures of their relatives in China and Egypt." This made Constance and Lamb laugh, for they had not thought about dolls having relatives.

"I don't suppose that you would want us to bring 'Fluff' and 'Blossom,'" suggested Lamb.

"Not as regular pupils," replied Miss Abitha, "but they can visit the school some afternoon, and then we will tell them something about their family, too.

Some of their relations, in other countries, are very distinguished."

"I think this is the nicest school," said Constance as Miss Abitha helped her on with her coat. "Why, it's just like playing school, isn't it, Lamb?"

"It's nicer!" declared Lamb.

Miss Abitha laughed. She stood in the door and watched them as they ran across the road, and grandmother was watching for them at her front door.

"We have had the loveliest time," exclaimed Lamb.

"And Miss Abitha wants us to bring 'Jabezza' and 'Betty,'" said Constance, "and she likes me with short hair. She said I looked just like my father."

"Well, dear, we must make the best of it," responded grandmother; "and you do look like Henry."

When grandfather came in to supper the little girls were eager to tell him all about the school. "Peter" sat on his knee and he patted her shorn head tenderly. "You'll have to stay with grandfather now," he said; "you see your father and mother are not used to bringing up a boy, but I know just how to deal with boys, don't I, Peter?"

So "Peter" snuggled down against his broad shoulder sure that she had pleased her grandfather by cutting off her hair, and thinking how much more delighted he would be when she should surprise him by appearing in boy's clothes.

After supper the little girls opened Miss Abitha's letters, and prepared to answer them. Grandmother



got them pens, ink and paper, and Constance and Lamb wrote very carefully and addressed the envelopes just as Miss Abitha had done.

"I think we ought to have a sleigh ride to-morrow morning," said grandfather. "We'll plan to start right after breakfast and go to the village. And perhaps I shall let Peter drive."

So with this pleasant prospect for the next day the little girls went happily off to bed.

"Sister," said Lamb, "the days go so fast that winter will be gone and we will be back in Boston in no time."

"I shan't be," declared Constance. "Grandfather needs a boy, and just as soon as he sees that I'm really going to be one he will want me to stay. And I shall have a garden and a pony and live here all the time."

"But mother won't let you," objected Lamb; "she only let us come for the winter."

"Perhaps mother and father will come and live here too," said Constance. "We can write them what a nice place it is, and that we want to stay here always, and then they will want to come."

"Don't you tell them about boys' clothes," advised Lamb.

"No," answered Constance, "that can be a surprise."

"My mother likes girls the best," announced Lamb, and Sister made no response for she was afraid it was true.

The next morning was bright and pleasant. The

snow glittered like diamonds, and old Lion held his head up and made the sleigh bells dance merrily as grandfather drove up to the front door. Grandmother had warmed a big silk handkerchief and tied it about "Peter's" head before putting on her hood, for she was afraid that Constance might miss the warm mass of hair. Mr. Eben Bean promised to look after the kitchen fire, and grandmother and Lamb were tucked warmly into the back seat of the sleigh and grandfather and Constance were snugly wrapped up on the front seat.

Grandfather slapped down the reins and away they went. Miss Abitha waved her apron to them as they sped past her little house, and then a curve in the road shut away Pine Tree farm and they drove over a road shaded by tall spruce and fir trees. "Peter" sat up very straight beside grandfather and took her first lesson in driving. She held the reins exactly as he told her, but it made her hands cold and she soon handed the reins back to him.

"When spring comes," said grandfather, "I shall buy a pony and then you can drive every day. I shall get a nice little cart just big enough for two girls, and the nicest harness that I can find; and perhaps I shall buy a small saddle so that you can ride horseback," and grandfather looked smilingly down at the straight little figure beside him.

"Oh!" said Constance, "but perhaps we will be back in Boston by that time."

Grandfather's smile faded, and he slapped the reins energetically and said no more about the pony.

They stopped a moment at the railway depot for grandfather to send a telegram to California to say that the little girls were all right, and then drove on to the village store where grandmother had some purchases to make. On the store steps were a number of brightly painted sleds. Lamb and Constance looked at these and remembered that there was a nice smooth hill just below Pine Tree farm, and thought what fun it would be if each of them had a sled of her own.

When grandmother came out from the store she said, "Well, children, haven't you picked out your sled yet?"

"Why, grandma," said Constance, "you didn't tell us to."

"There, Jabez," exclaimed grandmother, "haven't you told those children that we came over to the village on purpose to buy them sleds?"

Grandfather Neuman laughed. "No," he responded, "I thought that I'd see if they really wanted sleds. Do you, girls?"

"Oh, yes!" they both exclaimed.

"I've got mine all picked out," said Constance, and she sat down on a bright red sled with gilt bands.

"And this is mine," declared Lamb trying to lift a beautiful white sled with bright blue trimmings.

"All right," laughed grandfather, "I'll step right into the store and pay the damage."

Lamb's sled was put into the back of the sleigh and Constance's in front, and the little girls were in a great hurry to get home.

"If we don't get a slide before dinner we can't slide at all," said Lamb, "for we have to go to school at one o'clock."

"It won't matter"—began grandfather, but Mrs. Neuman said, "ssh, Jabez, we mustn't spoil them by letting them stay away from school to slide," and grandfather laughed.

While grandmother was getting dinner Constance and Lamb slid down the smooth hill, and came in with glowing cheeks and shining eyes.

"It's the best fun of all," declared Constance. "It's better than sawing wood, or dolls or kittens or going to school."

"I wonder if it is better than the top shelf," said Lamb, and at this both grandmother and grandfather laughed, for neither of the little girls had spoken of the sitting-room closet for several days.

When it was time to go to Miss Abitha's Constance and Lamb wrapped "Jabezza" and "Betty" up with great care and put them on the new sleds, and taking the letter for Miss Abitha, started out happily. Miss Abitha admired the sleds and said she would like nothing better than to go sliding with them. "And I believe I will, some day," she laughed. "I've got a good sized sled that I used when I was a girl, and when we have our winter picnic I'll slide down hill."

"Are we really and truly going to have a winter picnic?" asked Lamb.

"We are going to have one this very next Saturday," responded Miss Abitha, "that is if all my pupils do well," and she looked at Jabezza and Betty so anxiously that Sister and Lamb laughed merrily.

This afternoon the map had disappeared, and on the wall were pinned up a number of brightly colored prints representing the dolls of different countries. There were round-faced Chinese dolls, and queer wooden-looking Egyptian dolls, and dolls dressed like French ladies. The little girls thought that they were very strange.

"The new pupils may sit on the lounge for the present," said Miss Abitha, so "Jabezza" and "Betty" sat up very erect and attentive.

"As the school is larger we will call the roll each day," continued Miss Abitha, "and each pupil will respond when I call her name by saying 'Present.' Peter Constance Neuman," she called.

"Present," responded Constance with a little giggle, at which Miss Abitha also giggled.

"Miss Lamb Eunice Neuman," she continued.

"Present," said Lamb.

"Miss Jabezza Neuman," and there came a queer little squeaky voice "Present," which made them all laugh.

"Miss Betty Neuman," and "present," sounded

very clearly, considering that "Betty" looked no stronger than "Jabezza."

"Let me see," said Miss Abitha, thoughtfully, "do either of you remember who William Cowper was?"

"The most popular poet of his age," responded both the little girls promptly.

"Sure enough," said Miss Abitha. "Now I think it would be very polite to the new pupils to introduce them to the portraits of their relatives in foreign lands," and Miss Abitha began a funny little story of the picture of the doll from China, who was born in Hongkong, traveled across the sea to San Francisco, then journeyed by train to Boston, and then on to Pine Tree farm on purpose to be seen by her American relatives. Lamb and Sister listened and forgot all about the new sleds, the winter picnic, and everything else except Miss Abitha's school.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE WINTER PICNIC

SATURDAY morning found Sister and Lamb downstairs in time to help grandmother set the table for breakfast.

"Can't you tell us now about the picnic?" questioned Sister. Grandmother shook her head. "I promised Miss Abitha that I wouldn't say a word," she replied, "and even if I had not promised I am afraid I could not tell you very much, for Miss Abitha always plans them, and besides that we hadn't had one for years. Haven't you ever heard your father tell about 'winter picnics'? Why, Henry used to think that they were the nicest times in the whole year."

Sister shook her head. "No," she declared, "father never told us about them. Wouldn't it be nice if he and mother could be here to go to-day?"

"Perhaps they will next year," responded grandmother hopefully.

Sister shook her head again. "Next year," she said, "I s'pose Lamb and I will be back in Boston, or else way out in California. You know father may decide to live out there."

"Land, no," exclaimed grandma; "this is the first I've heard about it. Are you sure, Constance?"

Constance nodded. "Why, yes," she answered, "I'm sure he talked about it."

Mrs. Neuman sighed. The little girls had only been at the farm a short time but she had made so many plans for their future, that Henry and his wife should come back to the old home and the children grow up there, that even the suggestion that Constance and Lamb were really only visitors made her unhappy.

"You must write and tell your father that this is a much nicer place to live than Boston," suggested grandmother, "and you tell him that grandfather and Eben are getting old and this farm needs a young man to carry it on."

"Yes'm," agreed Constance, thinking of the box of boy's clothes and of grandmother's and grandfather's pleasure when they should see her all ready to take her father's place on the farm.

"Isn't Mr. Eben Bean going with us?" asked Lamb, as grandfather began to bring out the big fur robes and pile them into the sleigh.

"Of course he is," replied grandfather; "he will come over for dinner. It isn't too far to walk. I'm going to walk myself and let Miss Abitha drive you over."

"Can't I walk, too, grandpa?" asked Constance eagerly.

"Of course you can, Peter. We'll start off now and let the women folks come later."

Constance looked down at her long leggins. "I suppose, if I was a boy, I'd have long-legged boots, wouldn't I, grandfather?"

"I suppose you would," chuckled grandfather, and he resolved that on his next visit to the village he would buy the nicest pair of long-legged boots in the store. "It will please her," he thought, "and won't do a mite of harm. She'll want to stay with us if we do all we can to make her happy," and he looked lovingly down at the sturdy little figure trudging along beside him.

Grandmother had all sorts of queer packages to put in the sleigh, and Miss Abitha had as many more.

"Where's the rest of this family?" she inquired when they were all ready to start. "I see Mr. Neuman and Sister Peter are going to walk, and father will come later on, but what I want to know is, where are Jabezza and Betty? My two most quiet pupils."

"Can they go?" Lamb asked eagerly.

"Of course," laughed Miss Abitha, "if they are warmly wrapped up. What they will think at being slighted in this fashion is more than I can say." So Lamb hurried into the house and came back with the dolls closely wrapped up. Jabezza in a small shawl of Mrs. Neuman's and Betty in a scarf of Mr. Neuman's.

"What careless mothers!" exclaimed Miss Abitha. "Here it is near Christmas and neither Jabezza nor

Betty have winter cloaks. We will have a sewing bee and fit them out."

Instead of driving down the road Miss Abitha turned old Lion's head in the direction of the barns, and drove slowly across the smooth field toward the tall pines, and in a few minutes was in the shelter of the trees. A rough roadway skirted the grove and they drove along this, passing Mr. Neuman and Constance on the way. The road dipped down a little rise of ground into a sort of glen shut in on one side by high ledges and bordered on the other by a thick forest growth.

"Whoa!" said Miss Abitha, and jumped out. "You sit still just a minute," she commanded, and pulled out a big roll of newspapers and ran toward the ledges with them. Right at the foot of a tall rock she spread several layers of the papers on the snow and then hurried back to the sleigh. Mrs. Neuman had picked up two large fur robes and followed Miss Abitha, and now spread the robes over the newspapers, and by this time Mr. Neuman and Constance had arrived. Mr. Neuman took the front seat out of the sleigh and carried it over and stood it on the fur robes. And Lamb hurried Jabezza and Betty to this dry and comfortable seat. All the robes and blankets were piled up here, and all the packages. Then grandfather turned the horse about facing toward home, gave him a slap and said, "Go home, Lion," and off started the horse for his warm stable.

Just then Lamb saw a steady line of smoke creeping up among the rocks. "Oh," she exclaimed, "what is that?" and she and Constance ran to look; and, right behind the big rocks was a big fire burning brightly. The snow was all gone in front of the fire, and close by stood a wigwam of fir boughs.

"My!" exclaimed Constance, and both the little girls ran in at the opening in the front of the wigwam. Its floor was thickly carpeted with green boughs; and the little girls sat down facing the blazing fire and thought it the loveliest place they had ever seen. Grandfather soon followed them with Jabez and Betty, and found a good seat inside the wigwam for both the dolls. Then came Miss Abitha and grandmother to admire the fire.

"You must thank Eben for the wigwam," said grandfather; "he came over yesterday afternoon and cut the boughs and built it."

Miss Abitha and grandmother disappeared down behind the wigwam taking some of the mysterious packages with them, and Constance and Lamb followed. Grandfather stood before the fire listening and when he heard the little girls' exclamations of pleasure and Miss Abitha's laugh, he began to rub his hands together and laughed too, for he knew just what they had found.

In back of the small wigwam, and hidden from it by a growth of young spruce trees, Eben had put up four stout poles. These supported a thick roof of

spruce boughs. The ground was well covered with more spruce boughs, which made a dry, warm floor. A rough table stood in the centre of this shelter, and when the little girls looked at it it was no wonder that they exclaimed with pleasure. All around its edge was a thick mass of shining laurel leaves and evergreen. In the centre stood a tiny spruce tree hung with bright partridge berries and strings of popcorn, and there were six plates of birch bark. And at every plate was a wooden knife and fork and spoon!

"It's the loveliest place in the world, I know it is," exclaimed Lamb, as the sunshine filtered in in golden rays, and sent little shining threads across the green boughs and over the red partridge berries.

Grandfather soon followed them, and owned that he had helped Eben prepare the "dining-room."

"Look here," he said, and taking Sister and Lamb a little way from the camp, he pointed to a nest in a tall tree. "There, Peter," he said, "I suppose if you were a boy we should have you climbing up that tree to have a look at the crows' nest." Then grandfather hurried off to put more wood on the fire and the little girls were left alone.

"I suppose grandfather would be real pleased if he found that I could climb a tree as well as a boy," said Constance.

"But that's such a high tree, Sister," objected Lamb; "let's go back and see our nice wigwam, and



sit on the sleigh seat on the robes. Isn't everything lovely?"

Constance agreed happily. A winter picnic was certainly a remarkable affair. At the big fire hung a steaming kettle, and in the hot ashes in front of it Miss Abitha was covering up some potatoes. Grandfather was busy supplying wood, and grandmother was putting pies and gingerbread on the table.

"It isn't cold a bit," declared Constance running about the big fire. "Can we have a picnic like this every Saturday?"

"Cold," responded Miss Abitha. "Who ever heard of such a thing as its being any too cold in Maine! No, Peter, only one picnic a winter. Not another one until next year."

"Oh, dear," said Lamb, "perhaps we shan't be here next year!"

Miss Abitha turned her flushed face away from the fire and looked at the little girls, and nodded smilingly.

"If you are not here it will be your own fault," she responded, "for I have a lovely plan; and if you do everything to please your grandparents why, then your mother and father will probably come here to live next winter, and this will be your real home and we can have winter picnics every year."

Then grandfather and grandmother came hurrying back, and grandmother peered into the kettle and declared that the lamb-stew was nearly done; and a

loud "Hulloa," told them that Mr. Eben Bean was nearly there, and a moment later his tall form appeared from behind the rocks. Then he and grandfather did up some hot rocks in newspapers for everybody's feet, and Eben brought out six round sticks of wood, just tall enough for seats, and put them about the lovely table; and grandfather and Mr. Bean brought in the steaming kettle of lamb-stew and the hot baked potatoes, and everybody was ready for dinner.

After dinner Constance went and looked up at the nest in the tall tree. "I think that would please grandfather," she thought, and made a sudden resolve. She would climb the tree, and then call them to come and see her, and then grandfather would be proud of her and say she was as brave as a boy. But how could she get a start? The tree was so smooth and tall. There were no low, friendly branches which she could grasp and pull herself up by. The first branch was beyond her reach.

"Lamb, Lamb," she called, and Lamb, who had been making a big wreath of evergreen which Mr. Eben Bean had given her, came running out from the "dining-room."

"Lamb," announced Constance, "I must climb that tree, and if I could reach that first bough I could pull myself up, and then stand on that and reach another, and before I knew it I'd be right up to that nest."

"So you would," responded Lamb admiringly.

"Well," responded Constance, "I can't reach that limb."

"You could if you stood on one of those sticks of wood," replied Lamb. "I could hold it steady for you, and you could stand on it and then jump a little and grab right hold of the bough."

"Oh! Yes!" said Constance. "It was awful smart of you, Lamb, to think of that. If you want to sleep to-morrow morning I won't even try to wake you up."

Lamb smiled happily. "We must hurry," she urged, "or grandmother will say that it is time to start for home." So Constance lifted one of the heavy blocks of wood and tugged it over and stood it against the tall tree. Lamb held it steady and her sister stood up on it.

"Just as quick as I catch hold of that bough, you go right away, Lamb," she commanded; "you go out where the rest are, and when you hear me call you say, real careless like, as if you wasn't a bit surprised, you say, 'Oh, that's only Peter,' and be sure and say 'Peter,' and then you say, 'I guess she's climbed up to take a look at that crow's nest.'"

"All right," responded Lamb, and Constance with upstretched arms sprang toward the branch. But unluckily her foot slipped and she fell forward flat in the snow. There was a little scratch on her face when she got up and prepared to make another trial. This time she succeeded, and both hands grasped the strong limb; and Lamb, without waiting a moment,

turned and scampered around the bunch of spruce trees to the wigwam and the fire.

Grandfather had started for home to bring back Lion and the sleigh, and grandmother and Miss Abitha were packing up the baskets. Mr. Eben Bean was shoveling snow over the fire.

"This is a real weather breeder, if ever I saw one," declared grandmother, looking up at the blue sky flecked with white clouds, and sniffing the spring-like air.

"What is a 'weather breeder,' grandma?" questioned Lamb.

"It's a day like this, my dear," responded Mrs. Neuman, "when it is too pleasant for the season, and is generally followed by a storm."

"'Mackerel sky, a storm near by,'" quoted Mr. Eben Bean.

Everything had been taken from the dining-room, so none of the party were obliged to go in that direction, and "Peter" was not disturbed in her climb and scramble up the tall tree. She found it more of an undertaking than she had expected. It was a hard pull to get up on the first limb, and after that the boughs were so close together that they caught on her skirts and pulled at her hood. Her new mittens were torn by the rough bark, and long before she was within reach of the nest the little girl wished herself safe back on the ground. But she remembered what Miss Abitha had said, about doing everything possible

to please her grandmother and grandfather, and she choked back a little sob of fear and struggled on upward.

Not until Mr. Neuman drove old Lion down the slope did Miss Abitha and grandmother realize that Lamb was playing about the wigwam alone.

"Why, where is Sister?" asked grandmother.

At that moment a scream of terror sounded in their ears. "Grandmother, grandfather! Oh! Oh!"

"It's Peter," said Lamb, trying to remember her sister's instructions. "I guess she's climbed up to take a look at that crow's nest."

"My soul," exclaimed grandmother; and grandfather and Mr. Eben Bean, closely followed by Miss Abitha, disappeared behind the spruce trees.

"I guess they'll all be real pleased when they see that Sister can do things just like a boy," thought Lamb. But another scream of "Grandfather!" made even Lamb hurry to see what made Constance call so loudly.

Mr. Eben Bean was the first to discover what had happened. Constance had in some way caught her stout woolen skirt on a projecting limb, and could neither get up nor down. She did not dare let go her grasp to unfasten the skirt, and there she was, within reach of the nest, but securely fastened.

Her second call for help came when she felt the bough on which her feet rested begin to creak and bend. Before Eben reached the tree it had broken,

and Constance now hung by her hands and skirt with no support for her feet.

"Hurry, Eben," said grandfather, almost in a whisper, and then called out in a loud, cheerful voice, "You are all right, Peter. Keep a tight hold, and Eben will be there before you can count thirty and bring you safely down."

While grandfather called out Eben had swung himself into the tree and was going up from branch to branch. He was nearly within reach of the little girl when a startled cry from Constance made him look up more sharply. "My dress has let go," she called out, and before Eben's long arms could reach her Constance had let go her hold on the branch above her and was dropping straight down, down toward the frightened group below.



## CHAPTER VII

### A STORMY SUNDAY

GRANDFATHER had watched Constance's every movement. He had seen the little skirt give way, and sprang forward with outstretched arms so that the frightened child fell directly into them and was held close as the broad-shouldered man staggered back a step or two.

"Oh, grandfather," sobbed Constance. And grandfather made no response. Lamb wondered what made them all so quiet.

"Is the picnic all over now?" she asked.

Miss Abitha gave a husky little laugh and nodded her head, and they started back to where old Lion stood waiting.

"Drive home, Eben," said grandfather. "I'll fetch Peter." So Constance rode home in her grandfather's arms, her little scratched face resting comfortably against his shoulder, and her cold, mittenless hands tucked inside his coat.

"Will grandmother care because my dress is torn?" she asked.

"Not a bit," responded grandfather heartily. "Peters ought not to wear skirts, had they? You see, if you'd been a real Peter there wouldn't have

been any silly skirt to get you into all this trouble. What started you up that tree?"

"You said a boy would go up, and I thought perhaps you was wishing I was a boy. So I went up to show you that I could climb a tree just as well as a boy. I thought you'd be real pleased."

Grandpa's arm tightened its hold on the little figure. "You are a brave Peter," he said; "but I'm a sight better pleased to have you safe here than climbing a tree." And grandfather tried to laugh, and Constance looked up into his kind face and felt comforted. By the time they reached the barns she was well over her fright, and went racing toward the house with "Shep" after her and grandfather close behind. Grandmother and Lamb were waiting at the door for her, and she wondered why grandma kissed her, and why she went up-stairs to help her off with the torn dress and into a pretty red dress that was already for her. Grandfather seemed very quiet at supper-time and both the little girls were glad when it was bedtime.

"It was a lovely picnic, wasn't it, Sister?" Lamb asked as they went up the stairs.

"Some of it was lovely," responded Sister; "but falling way out of a high tree isn't a bit lovely. I wish I knew where my father's clothes are. Grandpa said to-day that my skirt made all the trouble."

"I'll ask grandmother," offered Lamb, "because you know it is almost Christmas time, and then comes

spring, and Miss Abitha said we must do everything we could to please grandmother and grandfather."

"I have to do the most of it," complained Constance. "I had to cut off my hair, and fall out of that tree, and I've got to wear boys' clothes. You don't do any of it."

"I'm learning to cook," retorted Lamb. "I stoned the raisins for cookies, and I beat up eggs for cake. Grandmother said that she could see that I was going to be a real help. She said that she shouldn't wonder if I was a born cook."

Constance was silent a moment and when she spoke again her voice was more hopeful. "Lamb," she began, "I've got a splendid plan for both of us. We must surprise grandmother by letting her see that you can cook, and then, when I'm all dressed up in boys' clothes, and you are making cake and pies and custards, why, then, Lamb, they will see that we have tried to do just what they want, and then they will write and ask father and mother to come right here in the spring. And they will buy us a pony, and we can have a garden, and live here always."

"And go to school to Miss Abitha," added Lamb.

The next morning the snow was falling thick and fast. You could hardly see the big barns from the kitchen windows. Mrs. Neuman had a blazing fire in the sitting-room, and Constance exclaimed:

"Oh! it's the day for another shelf, isn't it?"

"Yes, dear child," replied grandmother. "We will have to try and be happy indoors to-day."

Both the little girls thought that would be very easy, as they looked at "Fluff" and "Blossom" playing on the hearth-rug, and remembered there was a wonderful closet in that very room.

As soon as breakfast was over they all went into the sitting-room, and grandfather said he wanted to read them something, so Lamb and Constance sat down on the rug with the kittens, and grandfather took up a small, dull-covered book, put on his spectacles and said :

"I'm going to read you all about another snow-storm, children. It was written by a New England poet, a farm boy, just like Peter. His name was Whittier. Miss Abitha will tell you all about him. Now you see what he has to say about a snow-storm." And grandfather began :

"The old familiar sights of ours  
Took marvelous shapes ; strange domes and towers  
Rose up where sty or corn-crib stood,  
Or garden wall, or belt of wood ;  
A smooth white mound the brush-pile showed,  
A fenceless drift what once was road ;  
The bridle-post an old man sat  
With loose-flung coat and high-cooked hat ;  
The well-curb had a Chinese roof ;  
And even the long sweep, high aloof,  
In its slant splendor, seemed to tell  
Of Pisa's leaning miracle."

The little girls listened eagerly, and when grandfather finished, Lamb said that it was even better than "John Gilpin's Ride." Then in came grandmother from the kitchen with a long-handled corn-popper and a little basket of ears of corn. Constance and Lamb had never before popped corn, and they had great fun watching the tiny kernels puff out into white flowery shapes. Grandfather told them that when he was a boy he thought he had found out an easy way to make lead pencils. "I cut some good-sized elderberry sticks," he said, "and, as the centre is a soft pith, I had no trouble in making a round passageway through the sticks. Then I took the fire shovel, put my lump of lead on it, and held it over the fire until it was melted so it would run. And what do you think happened then?"

Neither Constance nor Lamb could guess.

"Well," continued grandfather, with a little laugh, "I had stood up my damp elder twig sticks between two bricks near the fire, and I started to turn the melted lead into them, thinking that my pencils were good as finished, when 'bing! bang!' and the lead flew out of the first stick right up into the ceiling of the room!"

"Oh, grandfather! what made it?" exclaimed the children. Then grandfather looked very wise and said: "Steam. You see the elder wood was damp; the hot lead coming into it created steam enough to

force the lead out. Combustion, just the same thing that causes big explosions."

"Oh!" said Constance, and resolved to ask Miss Abitha more about what steam could do, and how lead pencils really were made.

"When are we going to see what is on the next shelf?" asked Lamb.

"This very minute," declared grandmother, and turned and opened the closet door.

"It's the second shelf from the bottom this time," exclaimed Constance.

The second shelf seemed to be filled with bundles of all shapes. There were two long bundles, and grandmother handed one to each little girl, and when they undid the paper coverings there were two small wooden snow shovels exactly alike.

"Now we can go out and shovel snow as soon as it clears off," exclaimed Constance. Grandmother had two more packages all ready by the time they had finished examining the snow shovels. These packages were carefully done up in white paper. As they opened the wrappings there was a pair of red mittens in each package.

"There can't be anything on those other shelves," declared Lamb, "for we have everything we want now."

"But here are two more parcels," said grandmother, and when the little girls undid these they were more



surprised than ever, for inside each parcel were two queer looking frames covered with a network and little loops.

"What are they?" questioned Constance.

"Just run to the window and look out," responded grandfather, and both little girls obeyed, and there was Mr. Eben Bean going toward the barn and on his feet he had queer-looking frames just like those in the parcels.

"Oh, what are they?" exclaimed both the children.

"Snow-shoes," laughed grandfather. "Miss Abitha has some just like them and to-morrow she will take you snow-shoeing."

"Here are two more packages," called out grandmother, and Lamb and Constance ran back to the closet and took the two soft bundles that grandma held out toward them.

These bundles each held a soft, pretty pair of moccasins. Grandfather held them up and told the children just how they were made. "These were made by the Indians at Old Town," he said, "and are soft and warm on purpose to wear with snow-shoes."

"Can't we try them on?" asked Lamb, and in a moment their shoes were off and they were running about the room in their new moccasins.

The closet door was shut. There were only two more shelves, and the little girls forgot to be curious about those, for snow shovels, snow-shoes and moc-

casins were all such wonderful possessions that they did not even wonder about the other shelves.

In the afternoon grandfather went out to help Eben shovel paths to the barns, and to the well and hen house. The paths looked like white tunnels. It stormed all day. Grandmother said that it would be all the better for snow-shoeing to have a good fall of snow, so both Lamb and Constance were eager for the storm to continue.

The next morning the sun was shining out as brightly as ever. The moccasins and the red mittens were on, and the children all ready for their first lesson in snow-shoeing. They could hardly wait to finish their breakfast, before starting over to ask Miss Abitha to teach them how to walk on the queer-looking frames. Just as they reached the door they heard a gay "Hallo-a," and there came Miss Abitha. She had on a bright hood, a warm knit jacket and mittens, a short skirt, and was skimming over the field as if her snow-shoes were wings. She came up close to the porch and showed the little girls how to slip their feet through the loops. The first step Lamb took over she went, so that the waving snow-shoes were about all that could be seen of her, but in a short time both Sister and Lamb were able to follow safely after Miss Abitha.

"There won't be any real school to-day," she announced, "for if I play with you children all this morning I'll have to attend to my housework this

afternoon. So we'll call this a lesson in snow-shoes."

"Goody!" said Lamb, and Constance smiled happily.

"But I don't see what there is to teach about snow-shoes," said Constance, "except how to walk with them."

"You listen to your teacher," laughed Miss Abitha. "What do you suppose these wooden frames are made of? They are made of ash. It has to be cut at a certain time of year, seasoned carefully and shaved down to the right thickness. Then look at all that network of leather thongs ——"

Lamb lifted one foot, and bent over to look at her snow-shoe at the same moment, and stumbled and went rolling in the soft snow and had to be picked up again.

"Those thongs," continued Miss Abitha, "are made of moose-skin. The Indian hunters capture the moose, the skin is carefully preserved, and the greatest care is used to prepare it for snow-shoes. Why, in Canada and in all northern countries, people rely on snow-shoes to get about as much as we do on sleighs."

"Christmas comes next week," announced Lamb. "What do you suppose we will do Christmas?"

"I have a fine plan for Christmas," said Miss Abitha. "It isn't a new plan, it is something that your grandmother and grandfather and father and I do every year, and I hope your grandmother won't make any other arrangement on account of you children."

"I'm sure she won't," said Lamb eagerly. "I hope she won't," echoed Sister; for both the little girls had discovered that any plan of Miss Abitha's meant a good time.

Miss Abitha had led her pupils up beyond the barn toward the slope that led down to the "winter picnic" ground.

"We mustn't go any farther to-day," she said, "or there will be aching ankles to-morrow," so they turned toward home.

"You haven't told us about the Christmas plan?" ventured Constance, as they reached the porch steps.

Miss Abitha shook her head laughingly. "You must ask your grandmother about that," she said, and waved her mittened hand to them as she sped toward her own home.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CHRISTMAS PLAN

LAMB was so eager to hear what grandmother would have to say that she could hardly wait to slip her feet clear from the snow-shoes, and to stand them up carefully as Miss Abitha had told them to do.

"Grandmother! grandmother!" she exclaimed, running into the kitchen closely followed by Sister, "what do you and grandfather and Miss Abitha and Mr. Eben Bean do every Christmas?"

"I declare," responded grandmother, "I was just thinking about Christmas. You children take off your things and put them away, and I will tell you what we always do."

"Will you do just the same this year, grandma?" pleaded Lamb. "Promise us that you will do just the same. Miss Abitha said she hoped you would."

Grandmother looked smilingly down at the two eager faces. "Well," she replied, "one thing about our Christmas is that we don't give our own family a single gift. Would you children like that?"

"There isn't much anybody could give us now," said Constance thoughtfully; "we've got everything."

"There's two more shelves in the sitting-room closet," suggested Lamb.

Grandmother nodded. "You see," she continued, "that, as Sister says, we all felt that we had a great deal, so when Christmas comes we celebrate by finding some people who are not so fortunate and giving them a good time. Miss Abitha and I generally get track of somebody that hasn't prospered, and then we give them a surprise."

"How, grandmother?"

Grandmother laughed. "It was Miss Abitha's idea at first," she answered; "and we have carried it out so well that I guess there are some families in this township that are pretty sure there really is a truly Santa Claus. Do you want to hear, or had you rather wait and see and be surprised too?"

"Oh, tell us, grandmother," they both exclaimed.

"Well, this year we find that the Woodyear family, who live on a small farm near the village, haven't prospered and won't be apt to have much Christmas. The mother is sick, and there are four children, and an old grandmother who is deaf. Now this is the plan. The night before Christmas we dress your grandfather up to look like a picture of Santa Claus; and we rig up old Lion with that pair of reindeer horns that hangs in the shed, and put all the sleigh bells we can get on to his harness, and Mr. Eben Bean has a number of small lanterns that he hangs about the sleigh. Then we put all kinds of things in the sleigh. This year I shall have a nice turkey all ready to roast, and everything that goes with a turkey. And I shall



make some nice mince pies. Miss Abitha will make a big plum pudding. Eben has made a fine sled for one of the children, and grandfather will put in a barrel of flour, a nice ham, and Eben will give a barrel of apples, and we shall get some toys for the children."

"Couldn't we help?" asked Constance. "We could pop a lot of corn for them, and I could make some pretty boxes."

"Couldn't I make a cake, grandmother?" suggested Lamb.

"Of course you could," agreed grandmother.

"I guess I'd better begin on the boxes right away," announced Sister.

"Why, yes, Peter," said grandmother, smilingly, "make boxes and we will fill them with pop-corn and candy. And my little cook can help me make a cake."

The little girls smiled at each other. "Peter" felt that the time was near at hand for the real boy to appear; and Lamb resolved that at the first opportunity she would make a cake without my assistance.

"I've a good mind to send over some of your father's outgrown clothes," said grandmother. "I believe that they would about fit that oldest Woodyear boy, and it isn't right not to put them to some use. I'll get them out and look them over this very afternoon."

"I suppose if Sister had been a boy you would give her the clothes?" suggested Lamb.

"I expect they are pretty old-fashioned by this

time," responded grandmother; "but they are whole and warm."

That afternoon the box of boys' clothing was brought into the little girls' room, and grandmother decided that the whole lot should go to the Wood-years.

"I'll let the box stay right here," said grandmother, "until the day before Christmas."

The next week was a very busy one. Miss Abitha made two wonderful elephants of gray cloth and stuffed them with cotton, for the two youngest Wood-years. She had knit a soft, fleecy white shawl for the Grandmother Woodyear, and some warm, blue-yarn stockings for Mr. Woodyear. A comfortable flannel wrapper was all ready for the invalid mother.

Constance had finished pretty square boxes for each of the Woodyear children, and Lamb had baked little heart-shaped cakes to put in them. Big bags of pop-corn were ready and waiting, and, most wonderful of all, an ear-trumpet had been purchased and would be put with the white shawl for the deaf grandmother.

Constance had picked out a blue suit from the box of boys' clothes, and hidden it safely away. Both the little girls were sure that grandfather would be delighted when Sister, dressed as "Peter," should tell him that after this she intended to wear boys' clothes all the time.

"But I can't do any Christmas cooking for grand-

mother," said Lamb. "You see, she is always at home and I want to do it all myself."

"Well," said Sister, thoughtfully, "perhaps it will be better to save your surprise until after Christmas. They will be so pleased about me that if you wait and do not let them know you can cook, it will be just as well."

Lamb agreed. "Isn't it a lovely plan for Christmas?" she said happily. "I wish that we could see how glad they will be when Santa Claus drives up with his reindeer and unloads the things."

When Christmas Eve came there was great excitement at Pine Tree farm. No one was expecting anything for himself, but each was eager to help send their gifts to others. The sleigh was covered with robes and heaped full of generous gifts. Old Lion wondered what sort of a harness they had put on him, but he had an extra feed of good oats and was all ready for the trip.

Just before grandfather put on his big fur coat and cap, and the white beard and wig in which he played Santa Claus, Constance hurried up-stairs and made sure that the blue suit was safely hidden in the closet, all ready for her to put on the next morning.

Grandfather Neuman waited until quite late in the evening so that he would not encounter any curious travelers. They all went out on the porch steps to see him start, and Eben lit the tiny lanterns and hung them all about the sleigh. "Santa Claus" waved his

hand to them and started off, the sleigh bells jingling merrily and the lanterns shining. Then grandmother hurried the little girls off to bed, for it was nearly ten o'clock.

"I think it is the nicest Christmas plan that ever was," declared Lamb. "I hope they will do that way always."

"We may not be here to know about it if they do," said Sister.

"Oh, Sister," reproached Lamb, "what do you keep reminding me for? You are going to be a boy to-morrow, and I shall cook just as soon as I can, and then they will be sure to want us to stay always."

"But perhaps our mother and father won't come," persisted sister. "Mother don't say a word in her letters, and we both wrote to her and told her that we wanted her and father to come and live here."

"I guess they will come," said Lamb sleepily; "anyway, don't keep saying this isn't our home."

"It's funny that we won't have a single Christmas present in this house," responded Constance, "that is, nobody but grandpa, he'll have a truly Peter."

"I think it's a lovely Christmas," whispered Lamb.

The next morning Constance hurried to get up and put on "Peter's" clothes before either grandmother or grandfather could get up-stairs to light the fire. She hurried into the garments, combed her shorn locks, carefully parting them on one side, and started

down-stairs. She opened the kitchen door softly and called out, "Merry Christmas!"

She had expected to surprise her grandparents, but the little girl was hardly prepared for the amazement she saw upon their faces.

"My soul!" exclaimed grandmother, dropping the pitcher of cream she was about to set on the table; while grandfather, with startled eyes, came toward Constance exclaiming, "Henry! Henry, as I'm alive!"

"It's only Peter," laughed Constance running to meet her grandfather. "I saved out this one suit so I could be your real Peter."

"Isn't she the image of Henry?" said grandfather, putting his arm about the blue blouse. "Why it seems as if the boy was right here."

Grandmother Neuman had sunk into the big rocking-chair, and was wiping her eyes. "I declare," she whispered, "it frightened me."

"You're real glad though, aren't you, grandmother?" urged Constance. "I thought you'd be," and she smiled delightedly.

"It seems as if it really was Henry," declared grandmother; "but if we've got our boy where's our girl?"

"Oh, Lamb will be your girl," replied Constance. "We planned that all out."

Lamb had to be woke up and told that it was really Christmas Day; and then grandfather stepped out on

the front porch and rang a bell, and in a few moments Mr. Eben Bean and Miss Abitha appeared to take Christmas breakfast and to hear all about the Wood-years' surprise and delight at Santa Claus' visit.

But when Mr. Eben Bean saw "Peter" he was so surprised that he could hardly listen to what Mr. Neuman had to say. And Miss Abitha laughed so heartily that Constance began to wish herself back in her pretty red dress.

"Do you want to wear those things all day, dear?" grandmother asked after breakfast was finished.

"Of course she does," said grandfather; "for one day in the year I'm going to have a grandson."

"But I'm going to wear them right along," insisted Constance. "I'm not going to be a girl."

"My soul," whispered grandmother, but grandfather laughed and said, "Well, Peter, put on some warm coat and let's all go out to the barn. I saw Eben leading a new sort of an animal about out there, and we might as well have a look at it."

So Miss Abitha and Mrs. Neuman and the little girls followed the men out to the stable where old Lion and the farm horses were kept. Eben opened the door and held it back so that they could look in. And there, in the centre of the stable floor, stood a jet black pony harnessed into a tiny bright red sleigh! A band of sleigh bells went around his body, and they jingled merrily as he stepped about, although he could not step far as he was securely fastened.



"Merry Christmas from your father and mother," said grandfather.

"Oh!" exclaimed both the children, "did it come all the way from California?"

"No, indeed!" laughed grandfather, "it came from Dexter last night, but the money to pay for it came all the way from California."

Then Eben led the pony out into the yard and both the children patted its pretty head and neck.

"His name is Jet," said Eben. Then the girls got into the little sleigh and "Peter" took the reins and drove slowly out to the main road. Even when he walked Jet's feet seemed to dance over the ground.

"Isn't this the nicest time we ever had?" said Lamb, and Constance nodded. "If only mother could see us," she responded; "if mother and father could see us I guess they'd hurry and come here just as fast as they could."

"I guess they would," said Lamb.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONSTANCE MAKES A NEW PLAN

"I DON'T like to wear boys' clothes," announced Constance, as she and Lamb prepared for bed that night; "they are not nearly as pretty as girls' clothes; and every time Miss Abitha looked at me to-day she looked as if she was trying not to laugh. If it wasn't for pleasing grandfather I wouldn't wear them at all."

"You did look so funny," responded Lamb. "You didn't look like a boy, and you didn't look like a girl either. Didn't you see Mr. Eben Bean? Why, he laughed right out every time he looked at you."

Constance's face clouded. She forgot the new pony and all her good times, and was ready to cry when she thought that she must continue to wear the blue blouse and trousers which she had been so eager to obtain.

"I'll have to wear them," she whimpered, "because I told grandfather that Peter was his Christmas present. And now I suppose Mr. Eben Bean will always laugh at me, and Miss Abitha will look as if she wanted to. Oh, dear, oh, dear," and Constance began to cry.

Just then the bedroom door opened and in came Grandmother Neuman. She had expected that both the children would be full of happiness over "Jet," and when she saw Constance crying her own face grew very sober. She was afraid that the little girl was homesick.

But Lamb soon told her what the trouble was.

"Sister is feeling badly because she's got to wear boys' clothes," said Lamb.

"I'll—I'll wear them," sobbed Constance. "I won't disappoint my dear grandfather. Perhaps I'll get used to being a boy."

Then grandmother began to realize what the child had been trying to do, and her heart grew very tender toward her little granddaughter.

"I cut off my hair so grandfather would see I was trying to look just like a boy, and I climbed the tree, and I put on the clothes and I guess I can wear them," sobbed Constance.

"You dear child!" responded grandmother, sitting down on the bed beside Sister. "What made you think that your grandfather wanted you to be a boy?"

"He said if he'd had any choice one of us would be a boy, so I thought I'd be it."

"Now I'll tell you what I think," said grandmother firmly. "I think it is much nicer to have you a girl. Your father is our boy, and I always wished that I had daughters. And I came up here on purpose to

take the boys' clothes and put them away so that we could have our dear little Sister back again."

Constance sat up and wiped her eyes. "But my hair is all cut off," she objected.

"It is beginning to grow out real soft and pretty," comforted grandmother, "and if you want to play Peter, dear, you can, without really being Peter."

"So I can," said Constance, and the smiles came back to her face.

"And sometimes," went on grandmother, as she folded up the blue blouse and trousers, "sometimes you can dress up in these clothes if you want to. I'll put them away now."

"I guess I shan't want to," said Constance, remembering Miss Abitha's laughing eyes.

"Do you really like girls the best, grandmother?" asked Lamb.

"I like these two girls better than any boys in the whole world, and your grandfather does too," declared Mrs. Neuman.

"Girls are usefuler, I s'pose," suggested Lamb.

"Of course," said Mrs. Neuman; "and my girls are going to learn to do all sorts of useful things;" then she kissed them good-night, and hurried down-stairs to tell grandfather how unselfish Constance had been in trying to be "Peter" to please him.

"My surprise will be the best one, won't it, Sister?" whispered Lamb. "Because cooking is useful, and

grandmother will be real pleased to see that I can cook."

"If we are both going to be girls I'd better help you about the cooking," announced Constance.

"So you had," agreed Lamb, and the two little girls felt that their troubles had all vanished, and went happily to sleep.

They were both eager to see "Jet" the next morning, and the pony danced about in his box stall and when Eben led him out into the stable floor and showed them how to comb out his long mane and how to brush his glossy coat both the little girls danced too.

Then came a lesson in putting on "Jet's" harness, and then Eben carefully explained how to speak to the pony so that he would understand just what you meant.

"Abitha and I are going to drive over to the village to-morrow morning," said Eben, "and we'll hitch up 'Jet' and you can drive right along behind us."

Constance had almost dreaded going to school for fear that Miss Abitha would ask about "Peter," but Miss Abitha wanted to hear about the pony; and when the little girls went into the schoolroom and had fixed "Jabezza" and "Betty" in their usual places, and seated themselves at their small tables, they noticed pinned up on the wall the picture of a pony and underneath the picture was printed "Shetland Pony."

"This afternoon," said Miss Abitha, "we will try

and learn something about Shetland, where ponies come from."

Constance raised her hand and Miss Abitha nodded. "Did 'Jet' come from Shetland?" she asked. "Grandfather said that he came straight from Dexter."

"'Jet's' grandparents came from Shetland," replied Miss Abitha; "but they brought up their family in Dexter, where 'Jet' was born. Now, Shetland is an island, and it is one of a group of ninety islands, and here the ponies are at home. Many of them are much smaller than 'Jet,' but they are very strong and sure-footed. Besides these remarkable ponies there is another thing about Shetland, and about the whole ninety islands, that I want you to write down and tell your grandfather. That is that in midsummer daylight continues throughout the whole twenty-four hours, and in midwinter there are little short days when the sun can only be seen for about five hours."

Then Miss Abitha got out her big, bright map and showed the little girls what a long voyage "Jet's" grandparents had taken to reach America.

"I think it is about time that 'Fluff' and 'Blossom' were invited to visit this school," suggested Miss Abitha as the little girls were starting for home. "Please present my compliments, and say that I shall be most happy to receive them to-morrow afternoon and will make the school exercises as interesting as possible," and with a gay little laugh Miss Abitha said good-bye to her pupils.



"What do you suppose it will be to-morrow afternoon?" asked Constance as the two little girls hurried toward home.

"It will be something about cats," responded Lamb, "but I don't see how it can be interesting for 'Fluff' and 'Blossom,' do you?"

"It will be," declared Constance, "because Miss Abitha makes everything interesting."

Mr. Eben Bean was all ready to start for the village at an early hour. He watched Sister and Lamb harness the pony and said that they did it very nicely. Then grandfather tucked the warm fur robe about them, and he and grandma watched the little red sleigh move off right behind the larger team.

The pony's long black tail almost touched the ground. He trotted along behind old Lion, and Constance held the reins very carefully. She was to drive to the village and Lamb was to drive home. Now and then they met people out driving, or sleds piled high with wood whose drivers obligingly turned out into the deep snow to let them pass. Every one looked admiringly at the pretty pony and the shining sleigh, and the little owners of the team felt very proud.

"I guess that pony is safe enough," said Eben, when they stopped near the railroad station and "Jet" did not even prick up his ears at a big tooting engine.

"When do you suppose we can really help grandmother?" said Sister, as they drove toward home. "We keep having such lovely things happen to us all

the time, and have such good times that we'll forget to help her at all ; and the first thing we know it will be spring and father will send for us ; and grandmother will think it's best for us to go because we haven't helped her any."

"Oh, Sister," wailed Lamb, almost forgetting that she was driving her own pony, "grandmother wants us to stay, you know she does, and she wants father and mother to come too."

Constance nodded. "Of course she does if we are useful. Don't you remember she said that she wanted us to grow up useful women ? and we haven't been useful a bit. We must plan to cook for her just as soon as we can ; and I heard her say the other day that she dreaded house-cleaning, so we must get Miss Abitha to tell us how to clean house and we'll do that."

"If mother and father come we won't have to be useful," suggested Lamb. "I wish we could get them to come and have that as a surprise for grandmother and grandfather."

"Perhaps we can," said Constance.

The little girls had been talking so busily that they had forgotten all about the team ahead of them, and Lion was now out of sight.

"Make 'Jet' go faster, Lamb. Mr. Eben Bean will think that you can't drive a pony," commanded Constance. So Lamb called out "get dap" so suddenly and shook the reins so fiercely, that Jet gave a jump

forward. A jump so unexpected that Constance went bounding out of the tiny sleigh like a rubber ball and landed in the soft snow, greatly frightened and surprised. Jet broke into a run, while Lamb, alarmed at Constance's fall, began to call out loudly "Eben! Eben!" and in her surprise and terror dropped the reins which now kept striking against the pony's legs and sent him into a gallop. The little red sleigh swayed and lurched from one side of the road to another. Lamb's cries increased and the pony felt that he was being urged to greater speed, and rushed down the white track at such a pace that in a few moments he was nearly up to the larger team.

At the sounds behind them both Abitha and her father looked around, and seeing Lamb alone and the pony evidently running away, they were greatly alarmed. Mr. Bean handed the reins to his daughter and sprang from the sleigh ready to seize "Jet" as soon as the pony came within reach. But Lamb's cries had ceased, and at the sight of the big team Jet stopped running and was all ready to stop when Mr. Eben Bean called out "Whoa," and began to rub the pretty black nose.

Lamb explained what had happened to Constance, and Eben lifted her out of the tiny sleigh and put her in beside Miss Abitha. "You drive home," he said, "and 'Jet' and I will go back and get Peter."

Miss Abitha laughed when she saw her father try to double up his long legs in the little red sleigh. His



Wanda Smith  
1907

SHE LANDED IN THE SOFT SNOW



knees came up so high and he sat up so tall and looked so queer that Lamb forgot all about Sister and laughed too.

Sister had waded out of the snow into the road, and was walking sturdily toward home when she saw Jet and Mr. Eben Bean coming after her. And when she saw Eben all huddled up in the sleigh she began to laugh, greatly to Eben's satisfaction.

"Well, Peter, I guess you are all right after all," he said as she scrambled into the sleigh.

"Yes," she giggled, "I was real scared, but I forgot about it when I saw you coming." Then her face grew sober and she looked at him earnestly. "Mr. Eben Bean," she said, "why do you suppose so many things happen to me? My hair is all gone. I fell out of the tree, and now I've fallen out of the sleigh. And not a single thing happens to Lamb."

Mr. Bean did not laugh. "Well," he said, "as I look at it, those things didn't 'happen.' You wanted short hair, so you cut your hair off. You climbed the tree and didn't hold on, so you fell down. You didn't hold on to the sleigh, so you fell out. Things don't happen, Peter; you see things like that are just results. You bring them to pass yourself."

"But I don't plan to," objected Constance. "I plan to have 'em come out all right."

"I guess your plans will come out all right as you get older," said Eben comfortingly.

And Constance, thinking about her resolve to help



grandmother cook and to do the house-cleaning, hoped earnestly that Eben was right.

"I plan for my mother and father to come here and live," continued the little girl.

"That's the way to plan," responded Eben heartily. "And it's what your father ought to do. Your grandfather and I are both getting along in years and there's enough to do to keep your father busy."

"Couldn't you write and tell my father so?" asked Constance eagerly. "Couldn't you tell him that this is the best place for girls in all the world, and that we want him and mother, and that grandmother and grandfather want us. Oh, Mr. Eben Bean, couldn't you?"

"Perhaps I could," said Eben slowly.

"Will you?" urged the little girl, "and have them come in the spring, and surprise grandfather and grandmother. Not tell anybody but Lamb?"

"I think it's a first-rate plan," said Mr. Bean, "and I'll write Henry right away."

"I love to plan," sighed Constance happily, forgetting her tumble from the sleigh, and remembering only that Pine Tree farm was the most delightful home in the world, and wondering how Fluff and Blossom would behave as visitors at Miss Abitha's school.

## CHAPTER X

### VISITORS AT SCHOOL

IT was a queer little procession that started for Miss Abitha's school that afternoon. Constance led the way, holding "Fluff" and "Blossom," who wriggled about uneasily in her arms. Lamb was close behind her with "Jabezza" and "Betty." She held the dolls in her arms so that one looked over each shoulder and seemed to be smiling at "Shep," who brought up the rear, walking with great dignity. Neither of the little girls realized that Shep was following them until they reached Miss Abitha's door, and then they were so much occupied with the kittens and the dolls that he was in the front entry before they knew it.

Miss Abitha seemed glad that Shep had come. "I really ought to have remembered Shep," she said; "and although the exercises are more particularly for the invited guests, still I hope Shep will enjoy them too;" and Shep established himself close to Miss Abitha's chair as if he were really the guest of honor. Fluff and Blossom wandered about the room for a few minutes, and then sat down close to Shep and looked up at Miss Abitha as if to say, "Now we are all ready for school to begin."

Miss Abitha told them all the remarkable things

that she knew about cats; how the wild cats made their homes in hollow logs and caves, and taught their young to find food and to protect themselves.

"I think as we have visitors to-day that I will offer them a little refreshment," said Miss Abitha, and she went into the kitchen and brought back a tray with three saucers on it filled with warm milk, and placed a saucer before each of the "guests." Then she went out again, and when she came back the tray held two pink and gold cups filled with hot chocolate all covered with whipped cream. As Lamb and Sister took the cups they noticed two small packages lay on the tray, one marked "Jabezza" and one marked "Betty," and the little girls watched eagerly to see what the parcels contained.

Miss Abitha made a very polite bow as she approached the sofa where the dolls sat. "I will untie the packages for you," she said; "and I hope that you will make good use of the contents." So she set down the tray and undid the parcels, and there was a bright pink hood for "Jabezza" and a soft blue hood for "Betty."

"I have noticed," continued Miss Abitha, "that your mothers have been very careless, and have allowed you to go to school bareheaded, but now I shall expect you to wear hoods."

Constance and Lamb giggled happily. "Doesn't Miss Abitha 'make believe' lovely?" whispered Lamb. "It's just like playing school all the time."

After the little girls had finished their chocolate Miss Abitha seated herself in the rocking chair and said, "We will conclude the afternoon's exercises by reading an account of a Collie dog, a relative of our valued guest, who lived in Scotland and protected a flock of sheep from danger." And Miss Abitha read a pretty story of a Scotch Collie. Shep seemed to listen with great interest, and gave a short bark just as Miss Abitha finished as if to say "thank you."

"To-morrow," said Miss Abitha, "I would like to have my pupils bring their snow shovels, as it will be a lesson about Eskimos and their homes, and most of the lesson will be out of doors. You had better bring your sleds also," she added.

"What do you suppose Eskimos are, Sister?" questioned Lamb, as the little girls made their way home.

"I suppose it's some kind of an animal," replied Constance; "but we will ask grandfather, and find out all we can to-night."

So when Mr. Neuman came in to supper that night the first greeting was, "Grandfather! What are Eskimos?"

"Eskimos?" repeated grandfather thoughtfully. "Let me see. I believe that they are a little people who live in Greenland and Alaska and wear furs."

"People?" questioned Constance, "real people?"

"Yes," said grandfather. "They live in the land of snow and ice, and I have heard that they like raw

fish to eat, and that they have sledges for dogs to pull. What do you want to know about Eskimos for?"

"That's our lesson for to-morrow," explained Lamb. "It is to be an out-of-door lesson, and we are to take our snow-shovels and our sleds."

"Good for Miss Abitha," exclaimed grandfather. "I've a good mind to go to school myself."

"It's such fun, grandfather," said Constance. "We never know what plan Miss Abitha is going to have; but whatever it is it's just exactly what we like best. I wish I could always go to her school."

"Well, dear, you can go for several years if you stay at Pine Tree farm," said Grandmother Neuman.

"But we are only on a visit," Lamb exclaimed. "Father may want us just as soon as spring comes."

Grandmother's smile vanished, and grandfather looked very sober. They sometimes forgot that it was uncertain about the children's making their home with them, and made plans as if they were sure of keeping them. And although grandmother admired "Jabez's" new hood, and grandfather tried to remember all he knew about Eskimos, they both were wondering if they would really have to give the children up when spring came.

The next morning Sister and Lamb were very anxious to help grandmother; and wiped the breakfast dishes, scoured the knives, and brought in wood for the sitting-room stove. Then they made up their bed and put their room in order.

"When we get older we will do all the work," announced Constance, "and you can go riding every morning, and visit Miss Abitha every afternoon."

They were ready to start for school in good season. Miss Abitha had said that "Betty" and "Jabezza" could be excused that afternoon, so Lamb and Sister with their snow-shovels and sleds ran across the road and found their teacher all ready for them. She had on her hood and knit jacket and mittens; and there was the sled she had told them about, and on it lay a good-sized snow-shovel.

Miss Abitha laughed when she saw their surprised faces. "I'm going to make sure of a slide while I have good company," she said; "and school will open this afternoon by a coast down the hill back of my house," and taking hold of her sled-rope she led the way around the house where a long slope promised a fine coasting ground.

"Follow your teacher," called out Miss Abitha, and tucking herself snugly up on the old sled she skimmed away over the crust down the hill. Sister and Lamb lost no time in obeying her, and their merry shouts echoed behind them as their sleds sped over the snow.

"Wasn't that lovely!" exclaimed Lamb, as a long stretch of level ground brought them to a standstill.

"Glorious!" declared Miss Abitha. "I don't feel more than ten years old myself. Now, we must attend to our lessons;" and she picked up her snow-shovel, and the little girls followed her example.



"Eskimos live in houses made of snow," announced Miss Abitha; "that is, in Greenland, where planks are scarce. So now we must go right to work and make a snow house."

What fun it was, and how hard they worked; and all the time Miss Abitha was telling them the most remarkable things about these queer little people, who never go very far from the seashore because they depend almost wholly upon fish for their food.

So vigorously did they roll up the great blocks of snow that very soon they had four good solid walls, with a space left at one end for a door, and several smaller places on the sides open for windows.

"But it hasn't any roof," said Constance. "We ought to have a roof."

"Just wait a few minutes," responded Miss Abitha. "I'll go up to the house and bring the roof down."

"Can't we go, too?" questioned Lamb.

"Of course you can, but it's harder walking up hill than it is sliding down," replied Miss Abitha.

But they were soon at the back of the little brown house and Miss Abitha told them to follow her, and in the end of the shed there was a great pile of spruce boughs.

"Father cut these for us this very morning," said Miss Abitha; "and we will each pile up as many as will stay on the sleds and then sit on top and go sliding down to the Eskimo village."

In a few moments the sleds were loaded and away they went down the hill. Miss Abitha could put the green boughs across the top and Constance and Lamb ran in and out of the little house in delight.

"It's a very small house," declared Constance.

"It would be all the easier to keep clean," responded Lamb. "And grandmother says it's an undertaking to clean house. How do you clean house, Miss Abitha?"

Miss Abitha laughed. "I don't clean house. I just keep it clean. But your grandmother does both, and the way she cleans house is an undertaking. Every carpet is taken up and hung out on the clothes-line and swept and beaten. The floors are all washed; everything is taken out of the closets and brushed and aired, beds and blankets are taken out of doors; and then everything is put back in their places and your grandmother's house is as spick and span, as fresh and sweet as anybody's house can be."

"Oh!" exclaimed Constance despairingly, and Miss Abitha laughed again at the sight of the children's sober faces.

"Poor grandmother," said Lamb; "it's lucky that she's got girls growing up to help her."

"Indeed it is," responded Miss Abitha.

"I suppose grandmother would be real pleased if she could have somebody do all the house-cleaning, wouldn't she?" questioned Constance.

"I should suppose so," replied Miss Abitha; "but I

must dismiss this school or it will be pitch dark and we will be far from home among the Eskimos."

"This has been almost a winter picnic," said Lamb, as they trudged up the hill. "What are we going to do to-morrow, Miss Abitha?"

"I think we will write letters to your mother to-morrow," replied Miss Abitha, "and tell her how much you are learning."

"Goody!" exclaimed Lamb, "and tell her that we want to go to school to you always, so she and father will have to come and live at Pine Tree farm."

"Of course," said Miss Abitha.

"Do you think the children learn a good deal at Abitha's school?" Mr. Neuman said that evening after Sister and Lamb had gone to bed. "I know they are having nice times with Abitha, but you know, Eunice," and grandfather tried to look very serious, "that we mustn't consider their good times the chief thing. We must bring them up right and not spoil them."

"They learn twice what most children learn," declared Mrs. Neuman; "and I don't believe Abitha has had such a good time for years as she has with those children."

Grandfather chuckled and then continued, "I have been thinking that I would write to Henry and make him a business proposition. Tell him that if he would come home and take charge of things I would give him all the farm brought in; and give him what

B. & M. stock we own as a sort of bonus," and grandfather looked at Mrs. Neuman as if he expected her to say that he was a very shrewd man of business.

"Well, father, I would if I was you," responded Mrs. Neuman; "but we won't say a word about it to the girls, and then if Henry does come home it will be a nice surprise for them."

Mr. Eben Bean had already written to Mr. Henry Neuman, as he had promised Constance, and grandfather's letter and that of Sister and Lamb soon followed so that the little girls' father began to think that perhaps he was really needed at Pine Tree farm.

"Father wants us to come and surprise the children," he said to his wife. "Sister and Lamb want us to come to surprise their grandfather, and Eben wants us to come because he says it's where we belong;" and Mr. Henry Neuman laughed at what he called a "bunch of reasons."

"Perhaps we can go and surprise them all," suggested the little girls' mother.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE NEXT SHELF

"I KEEP wondering about that next shelf in the sitting-room closet," said Lamb one January day when heavy clouds had shut the sun from view, and little splashes of rain kept coming against the windows. "Grandmother said we would save the shelves for stormy days, and I'm sure this is stormy."

The little girls were out in the shed, and Constance was working busily at the little work bench that Grandfather Neuman had made for Peter. She was making a knife-box for grandmother. It was made very neatly with divisions for knives of different sizes, and as Lamb spoke Constance was just smoothing off the edges.

"There's only the two shelves now," Constance reminded her; "and I expect the top-shelf is the very best of all."

"I can't think what can be on those shelves," said Lamb. "I began thinking this morning about the next shelf and I've thought of some things."

"Don't tell," exclaimed Constance, jumping up from the work bench; "but wait and see if your thoughts come true. Now I'm going to carry this knife-box in to grandmother. I guess she will be real pleased."

Mrs. Neuman exclaimed with surprise when Constance gave her the box. "It is made beautifully, Sister," she said; "and is just what I needed. You see, it's much better to have a thoughtful girl in the family than to have a careless boy."

"If it wasn't Saturday we could go to school," suggested Lamb, and a little tone in her voice made grandmother wonder if the little girl was going to be home-sick, so she responded quickly: "And it's a rainy Saturday; why, it is just the day for the next shelf."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Lamb. "I was hoping you'd say so."

"We want grandfather to be here when we see the things," suggested Constance.

"Yes, indeed," agreed grandmother; "and just as soon as dinner is over we will open the sitting-room closet and see what is on the next shelf."

"We can wash the dishes, can't we, grandma?" asked Lamb, for both the little girls felt that their grandmother was being very kind to them when she allowed them to wash dishes, or to help her about the work of the house. They were making plans all the time to learn how to keep the house, so that their grandmother would be surprised at their usefulness and make up her mind that she needed Constance and Lamb to live with her always.

"I'm real sorry this rain came just as it did," said Grandmother Neuman, as she and Constance spread the white table-cloth over the round table, "for if it



had been pleasant on Monday your grandfather and I were planning to drive to the village and take dinner with the Smiths, and not come home till afternoon."

"And let us keep house?" asked Constance.

"Why, yes," said grandmother. "Miss Abitha was going to have you both come over and take dinner with her, and Eben was coming in to look after the fires."

"That would be splendid," said Lamb with so much energy that her grandmother looked at her in surprise.

"She don't mean that it would be splendid to have you and grandfather go away," explained Constance.

"Yes, I do," interrupted Lamb, "splendid, splendid, to have them go away and then come back and see how lovely we can keep house."

"Well," said grandmother, "we can't go Monday unless the weather changes. This rain will spoil the sleighing, so we will have to wait."

"Will we clean house when they go, Sister?" Lamb whispered to Constance as they were putting away the dishes.

"Clean house!" responded Constance, "of course we won't. Besides, it would probably take a week to clean house, carpets and all. But we can do some cooking when they go, so it will be easy for grandmother the first of the week."

"Oh, yes," agreed Lamb. "What will we make, Sister?"

"Cake, probably ; and perhaps a batch of fruit cookies," replied Constance.

"All ready for the next shelf," called out grandfather, and both the little girls skipped into the sitting-room with "Fluff" and "Blossom" close behind them.

Grandmother Neuman unfastened the closet door. She could just reach the next shelf, and grandfather stood close beside her to take whatever the shelf might have to give.

Grandmother reached up and took down two narrow, flat packages, and grandfather handed one to each of the children. When they had taken off the brown paper wrappings Lamb exclaimed : "It's what I hoped would be on a shelf. Oh, Constance, see ! It is a lovely box of water color paints ; now we can do maps for Miss Abitha."

"And I can paint a picture of 'Jet' to send to my father," said Constance.

"These are books, I know," declared Constance, as down came two more packages, and the boxes of paints were set on the table while the children eagerly undid the new parcels.

"Mine is all about a black horse," Constance announced, holding up a book with the picture of a black horse on the cover.

"And mine is lovely," echoed Lamb ; "look ! Sister ! Here it tells about the adventures of a talking doll !" and Lamb curled herself up in one corner of the big

sofa forgetting all about the box of paints, the rainy day, or whatever else the wonderful closet shelf might have to offer.

"Well! well!" laughed grandfather. "What about these other things in here?" And he reached up for two boxes, and brought them over to the sofa, while grandmother closed the closet door and followed him.

"Now," said grandfather, "I think that these," touching the unopened boxes, "are the best things of all the shelves have given you."

Lamb closed the delightful book and looked up wonderingly.

"Which would you rather have, Lamb," asked grandmother, sitting down close beside Lamb, "something useful, or something that was pretty to look at?"

"Both!" responded Lamb so quickly that both Mr. and Mrs. Neuman laughed heartily.

"Here it is, young lady," said grandfather; "here is your wish, useful and pretty," and he removed the paper and handed Lamb the prettiest little box she had ever seen. It was of dark, polished wood. Over each corner were dainty scrolls of silver; and on the top of the box was a small silver plate with "Eunice" on it.

Constance's box was exactly like it. The boxes had tiny silver locks and keys, and when the little girls opened them they exclaimed again for inside were all sorts of threads; a little needle-book, an

emery-ball to keep the needles bright, tiny scissors, and a silver thimble.

"I guess we can't ever thank you," said Constance soberly, and grandmother and grandfather looked at each other and nodded happily. They thought they were very well thanked by seeing such happy faces.

That afternoon went very quickly. The rain stopped before night so that Mr. Neuman said that he was quite sure they could go to the village on Monday, and Lamb and Constance almost forgot the lovely work-box, the water-colors, and the books in their eagerness for Monday to come when they could begin to really help their grandmother by making cake and cookies.

"Perhaps when she sees that we can cook she will let us do it all," said Lamb hopefully. Constance shook her head. "Not at first," she responded; "probably she will let us do certain things. I believe I could make apple pies, Lamb. I've watched, and it looks just as easy."

"Goody! I'll make fruit cookies and you make apple pies, Sister, and we will get supper all ready for them Monday night," suggested Lamb, and Constance agreed.

Mr. and Mrs. Neuman were surprised and almost disappointed because the little girls seemed in such good spirits, and bade them good-bye so cheerfully.

"We'll be home by dark," said grandmother, and

sighed a little when Lamb called back : " Oh, we wish it was a whole week, don't we, Sister ? "

" I guess they don't care much about us after all," said grandfather as they drove toward the village. " They seem glad to have us go away. Probably they are getting homesick for their father and mother. But I don't know of anything more to do for 'em to make 'em happy, do you, Eunice ? "

" Well," said grandmother, thoughtfully, " I don't feel as if they didn't care about us. If they were like other children I should say that they had some mischief in view, but both Sister and Lamb are anxious to please us and not make any trouble. I have thought," continued grandmother, " that it would be real nice if they had a saddle for Jet. They might like to ride horseback."

" I wouldn't care a bit if they did get into mischief," declared grandfather. " I told Eben to go in every hour and take a look at the fires, and see that they were all right. I've been thinking about the saddle myself ; but you see, Eunice, only one could ride at a time, and that doesn't seem hardly fair."

The sleigh had scarcely vanished from sight before Lamb and Sister ran back to the kitchen, put on their long-sleeved aprons, and began their preparations.

" We must get our cooking done before dinner-time," said Constance, " because we will have to go over to Miss Abitha's then."

"But we must get home in time to have supper ready," announced Lamb.

"Yes, indeed," agreed Constance.

When Mr. Eben Bean made his first visit he found Constance busily paring apples. Lamb had just gone into the pantry. So Mr. Bean reported to his daughter that the little girls were all right; and Miss Abitha felt no anxiety about them.

"I guess I won't make but one pie," said Constance; "but if I peel too many apples I'll just make some jelly."

"Yes," answered Lamb; "and I'd better make a cake instead of cookies. Cake is usefuller, but cake takes more eggs," and she proceeded to break a number of eggs into the large yellow mixing-bowl. She had brought out the egg basket and set it on the table beside the sugar firkin.

Lamb proceeded to beat the eggs vigorously, and in a short time added several cups of sugar to the eggs and a small portion of flour.

"You put butter in cake," announced Constance, but Lamb shook her head smilingly.

"Not in cake," she responded; "it's cookies you put butter in; cake is real easy; all I have to do now is turn my cake into the baking-pan and put it in the oven and let it cook an hour."

"Pies are a great deal harder," rejoined Constance, "because the apple has to be all sliced up and you



have to make an upper crust out of dough. Do you remember about dough, Lamb?"

"Oh, yes!" declared Lamb, confidently, "dough is just flour and water; and you put it on the bread-board and roll it out, and then you cut out enough for the tops and bottoms of the pies. It's just as easy."

Constance looked at her sister admiringly. "I believe it's just as grandma says, that you are a born cook, Lamb!" she declared.

"Won't they be pleased when they come back," responded Lamb, "and find supper all ready and a nice cake and a lovely apple pie in the pantry; I guess the first thing grandmother will do will be to write to mother what a help we are, and that she hopes we can always live here."

After Lamb's cake was safely in the oven she began to mix the pastry for the apple pie. Turning about a pint of water into the mixing-bowl she proceeded to put in enough flour to make a very thick paste.

"You can't ever roll that out with a rolling-pin," remarked Constance, looking at the sticky mass.

"I can by putting flour on the cake board," declared Lamb. "I've watched grandma, and before she rolls out anything she always sprinkles flour on the cake board."

"So she does," agreed Constance, "but the dough looks yellow and funny."

"That's because it's rich," explained Lamb. "I've heard grandmother say lots of times that eggs made

things rich, so I mixed an egg right in with this. Your pie will be lovely, Sister."

"I shall tell them that you helped," declared Constance generously. "You see, you got the best start about cooking, Lamb, because I expected to grow up a boy."

Lamb nodded understandingly.

"What makes you bother to roll it out, Lamb?" continued Sister. "You could spread it on the plate just as well, and then we'll put in the sliced apple and spread some more on top."

"Yes," replied Lamb, "I should think grandma would do that way, it's ever so much easier."

So the pie plate was spread with the batter, slices of apple were placed upon it, and then Constance spoke again. "Don't grandmother put in something besides apple?"

"In apple pies? Why, of course not!" replied Lamb. "That is why they are apple pies, just because there is nothing else in them."

The apple pie soon joined the cake in the oven ; and Constance started for the pantry with the sugar firkin while Lamb followed with the big basket full of eggs. How it happened Lamb did not know, but her foot slipped and she lurched forward against Constance with such force that over they both went, Lamb falling directly on top of the egg basket, while the sugar firkin escaped from Constance's hand and its contents streamed out over the floor.

"Oh, Lamb," wailed Sister, when they had scrambled to their feet, "how will we ever get clean again!" for eggs and sugar were clinging to their clothes, their feet were covered with blotches of yellow, while a big mass of broken eggs was spreading itself over the shining floor.

"My face is all covered," complained Lamb; "can't you get a towel and wipe my face, Sister?"

"If we step anywhere we will step right into it," said Sister. "Oh, dear, Lamb, it's all your fault. What made you fall over?"

Lamb began to whimper, and just then Eben appeared on his second visit.

"Oh, Mr. Eben Bean!" exclaimed Sister, "we fell over and broke a lot of eggs and spilled the sugar firkin, and if we take a step we'll get more eggs on us."

For a minute Mr. Bean stood helpless. Then his eyes fell upon the sticky mass creeping over Mrs. Neuman's spotless floor and he reached for the most available help, which proved to be a dust-pan and a brush-broom. With the aid of these and several towels Mr. Bean succeeded in removing the greater part of the wreck and then turned his attention to the little girls.

"This beats Hannah Cook!" he declared. "You just stand where you be till I call Abitha; I don't know where to begin."

His vigorous calls brought Miss Abitha to the rescue. As she ran in her anxious face brightened and

she began to laugh. "I thought something dreadful had happened," she said, picking Lamb up and carrying her toward the sink; "and all the trouble is a few broken eggs."

"That's all," spluttered Lamb, for Miss Abitha was vigorously rubbing soap and water over her face and head.

It was not long before she had removed all traces of the accident from the floor, and had sent Lamb and Constance up-stairs to change their frocks.

"Then come right over to my house," she said; "for dinner will be all ready, and chicken pie doesn't like to be kept waiting."

Both the children were very quiet as they took off their pretty dresses, now all spotty and sticky, and put on their every-day frocks. In the excitement of the accident they had entirely forgotten about the cake and the pie in the oven, and they put on their hoods and coats and started for Miss Abitha's, feeling disappointed and uncomfortable.

Miss Abitha had wondered to herself what the children were doing with the eggs and sugar, but she asked no questions and tried to make them forget the accident.

There was a lovely surprise for dinner; little plum puddings for each one! And after dinner Miss Abitha said that she did not believe they had ever heard her sing! And when she began to sing the little girls forgot all their troubles and looked at Miss Abitha with

delighted smiles. It did not seem possible that the day was so nearly finished when they heard the sound of sleigh bells and Mr. Eben Bean said: "Here's your folks driving into the yard."

"Oh," wailed Constance, "we meant to have supper all ready."

"Our cooking will all be burned up," echoed Lamb, as they ran toward home.

"My soul!" exclaimed grandmother as she opened the kitchen door, "what's all this smoke?" for the oven door had not been tightly closed, and as the "cake" and "pie" burned the smoke had crept out into the room.

"It's my pie," announced Constance.

"And my cake," wailed Lamb.

"All burned up," they exclaimed together, as grandmother opened the oven door and they saw the cake pan with its little covering of charcoal and the pie plate with its burned apple.

Grandfather stood just inside the door. "I believe there's mischief in 'em after all," he whispered to himself, but just then "Peter" rushed toward him with outstretched arms.

"Oh, grandfather!" she said, "it's been dreadful. We broke a whole basket of eggs all over us, and we spilled the sugar, and now our nice pie and cake that we made to help grandmother is all burned up."

"I should say they were," said grandmother, pointing toward the oven.

"We wanted you to go away so we could cook for you, and now it's all spoiled," sobbed Lamb. "It was lovely cake, grandma."

"Of course it was," said grandmother, gathering the little figure into her arms.

"And I made the pie," said Constance. Grandpa had his arm about Peter, and he whispered to himself again, "No mischief after all, just trying to help, bless 'em."

"Would it take a week to clean house, Sister?" questioned Lamb, after they were safe in bed. "I don't believe grandmother will ever go away for a week. How can we ever clean house?"

"I've got a plan," answered Constance. "I'll tell you to-morrow."

"If our cooking hadn't burned up it would have been a lovely surprise for grandma, wouldn't it, Sister?"

But Sister was fast asleep.



## CHAPTER XII

### ALL KINDS OF PLANS

MRS. NEUMAN made a plan of her own that night, and when she told Grandfather Neuman about it he said that Constance and Lamb were lucky girls to have such a nice grandmother.

"You see," Grandmother Neuman explained, "both Sister and Lamb want to help us. And every bit of trouble that they have made is because they had to make their own plans and no one told them what to do to be useful. I blame myself, Jabez, that I didn't realize it before. All we have been thinking about was that they should be amused; and here they have been troubling their poor little heads about being a help. Now, my plan is to begin to-morrow and teach them to cook."

Grandfather nodded his approval, and when the two little girls came down-stairs the next morning they saw that their grandmother was making preparations for baking. There was a big pan of red apples on the cooking-table, and after breakfast grandmother said:

"I wonder if I can't have some help about my baking this morning?" and when both Sister and Lamb called out eagerly, "Yes, indeed," then grandmother felt sure that her plan would be successful. So two clean aprons were brought out from the closet,

and Lamb exclaimed, "Will I make the pies, grandmother? I made such a lovely one yesterday, or," seeing Sister's surprised look, "Sister and I did together, but it got all burned up."

"How did you make it?" inquired grandmother.

"I peeled and sliced the apples, just as you do," began Constance, and grandmother nodded approvingly, "and then Lamb made a nice dough of flour and water and spread it over the pie-plate. Then we put the sliced apple in and spread more dough over it, and then it was all ready to put in the oven. That was right, wasn't it?" concluded Constance.

"No," said grandmother, "there wasn't anything right about that pie except peeling and slicing the apples. That is the first thing to do, so we will all peel apples together. I save the cores and the peelings sometimes, and boil them down for jelly; but we are rather short of sugar to-day, so we will just let Eben have them for the pigs."

"Do you put sugar in apple pies, grandmother?" exclaimed Lamb, in surprise.

"Indeed you do, my dear, and a little piece of butter, and some grated nutmeg, and your grandfather likes about a teaspoonful of molasses in each pie. But it is the pastry," and grandmother stopped her work and looked very serious, "it is the pastry that is really important. Some cooks never get the knack of good pastry and I shall feel very proud of my girls if they succeed."

"Is pastry the dough?" questioned Sister.

Grandma laughed a little. "Why, yes, it is," she replied, "but dough isn't pastry."

It was a very busy and happy morning, and when Grandfather Neuman sat down to dinner both the little girls cried out, "We made the pie, we made the pie!" so that grandfather began to laugh. "Well," he asked, "did these new cooks remember the teaspoonful of molasses?"

"Yes," they both responded, "we made two pies; one is for Mr. Eben Bean because he likes molasses, too."

"Every week we are going to make pies," declared Sister; "and as soon as we get pies learned we are going to make bread. I guess when we go home our mother will think that we have learned a good deal."

"So I have lost my Peter, have I?" asked grandfather, "and your grandmother is going to have two girls," and he shook his head and tried to look very solemn. "Spring coming on, too, gardens to be made, and lots of Peter work to do."

"I can do Peter work, too," declared Constance. "You know I can, grandfather."

"Of course you can," agreed grandfather. "Just as soon as garden time comes grandmother will have to manage to do the cooking without you, and I will have you to help me plant cabbages."

"Perhaps we shan't be here," suggested Lamb. "Mother said that we could stay until spring, so perhaps before garden time we shall have to go away."

"Nonsense," exclaimed grandfather, but the little girls noticed that grandmother's face grew very sober, and she did not smile again until Lamb cut the freshly-baked apple pie and carried Mr. Neuman a big piece. Then both Mr. and Mrs. Neuman smiled, for grandfather said that it was the nicest pie he ever tasted in his life.

"I do hope Mr. Eben Bean will like his pie," said Sister.

When Constance and Lamb started for Miss Abitha's that afternoon Constance carried the apple pie in a small covered basket, while Lamb had "Jabezza" and "Betty," both of whom were very constant in their attendance at school.

"I am just as sure as can be that grandfather wants us to live here," declared Constance, as the two little girls walked slowly along.

"I guess grandmother will too just as soon as we get the house all cleaned," responded Lamb.

"It's clean enough now," announced Constance; "but if the carpets and things have to be carried outdoors and brought in again we might as well do it."

"What was your plan, Sister?" asked Lamb anxiously.

The children were walking so slowly that Miss Abitha, who was watching them from her sitting-room window, began to wonder if they were getting tired of school.

"I almost forgot to tell you," answered Constance,

giving the covered basket such a swing that Lamb called out, "Oh, Sister! Mr. Eben Bean's pie!"

"My plan," went on Constance, peeking into the basket to make sure that the pie had not suffered, "is to clean the house without grandmother knowing anything about it."

Lamb gave a jump of delight, and Sister continued: "You know the carpets are all tacked down so we can begin taking out the tacks. We can take the tacks out of the carpet in our room and the two other chambers up-stairs, and then out of grandmother's room, and do the parlor and sitting-rooms last."

"It will be awfully cold in those shut up rooms," objected Lamb.

"What if it is?" reproved Sister, and just then Miss Abitha opened the door and rang the little bell, so they ran up the path as fast as they could.

"Dillers and dollars, and ten-o'clock scholars," said Miss Abitha. "I thought you had weights on your feet and that you would never get them up the path."

"I was telling Lamb a lovely plan," responded Constance.

"But it's a secret," said Lamb, "a surprise for our grandmother."

"Not apple pies, is it?" asked Miss Abitha, and then the little girls told her of their morning's lesson in pie-making, and Sister opened the covered basket and took out the pie for Mr. Eben Bean.

"To-morrow," said Miss Abitha, "I want you to bring your work-boxes to school, and invite your grandmother to come too. I am going to have a dressmaking lesson."

"To make us dresses?" asked Lamb.

"No, indeed," replied Miss Abitha; "I was over to see the Woodyear family this morning and there are two little girls over there, baby girls almost, one two and the other four years old, and they don't seem to have clothes enough; so I thought it would be a good chance to teach you how to make dresses."

"Have you any cloth?" asked Constance.

"Well," replied Miss Abitha, "I have ripped up some of my skirts and we can cut those over."

When Mrs. Neuman heard of Miss Abitha's plan for the dressmaking class, she said that it was just like Abitha. "But she isn't going to cut up her own skirts," declared grandmother; "to-morrow morning the children and I will drive over to the village and get material."

"Abitha had better go, too," suggested grandfather; "she will know just what's needed."

The next morning old Lion was harnessed into the big sleigh and Jet into the little red sleigh, and they started for the village.

When they reached the store Mrs. Neuman bought bright pretty flannels for the little dresses, and some warm shoes and stockings.

"I brought my dollar," Lamb whispered to Con-



stance, for in one of mother's letters had come two crisp one dollar bills, one for each of the little girls. "Do you suppose grandmother will let me buy something?"

"I guess so," answered Constance, and when Lamb asked permission to spend her dollar Mrs. Neuman agreed.

"I know just what I'm going to buy," Lamb announced joyfully, as the two little girls walked about the big village store and looked at the shining cases full of all sorts of articles. "I am going to buy a lovely present for the Woodyear baby."

"What?" asked Constance eagerly.

"I'm going to buy it that cart," and Lamb pointed to a red cart; "then its brothers and sisters can take it to ride, and the baby can pull it around herself."

"I should buy something useful," declared Constance; "I should buy it a nice pair of rubbers."

"Carts are useful for babies," insisted Lamb, and she purchased the cart.

While the little girls had been discussing the cart Miss Abitha and Mrs. Neuman had decided upon something that they felt sure would please Sister and Lamb very much, and also give the Woodyear children a good time. They planned that it should be a busy week sewing for the needy children, and that all the Woodyear children should be invited to Pine Tree farm for Saturday afternoon, and then given what they had ready for them.

"Couldn't Sister and I make some nice apple pies for them?" ask Lamb.

"Yes," said grandmother, looking at the cart a little doubtfully; "yes, you can make apple pies, and we will stop at the Woodyears' on our way home and ask them to come on Saturday, and you can give the baby the cart."

When Constance saw how delighted all the Wood-year children were with the pretty cart, she forgot that it was not useful.

"I think it was lovely of you to think about the cart, Lamb," she exclaimed, when the six-year-old Woodyear had put the baby in the cart and began to pull her around the room.

Then all the family went to the door to admire Jet and the little red sleigh, and Constance said she would come over Saturday and take Mary, the six-year-old Woodyear, over to Pine Tree farm. It was arranged that Mr. Eben Bean would drive over for the other children, and when the visitors started for home the Woodyears were all smiling and happy over the prospect of a happy day at the farm.

It was a busy week. In the mornings Constance and Lamb helped grandmother make cookies and dough-nuts and pies. In the afternoons Miss Abitha cut out small dresses and stitched away on the sewing-machine, while grandmother showed Lamb and Sister how to sew on buttons, take out basting-threads and hem, and when Saturday came everything was ready, not only

to give the Woodyear children a happy day but warm and suitable clothing enough to last the two younger children for a long time.

"Jimmy Woodyear is a nice boy," Mr. Eben Bean said; "and he's only eight years old. We ought to have something for Jimmy."

"Well," said Miss Abitha laughingly, "Jimmy can have my sled. I always meant to give it to some nice boy after I'd had one good slide; and I've had half a dozen this winter."

"You enjoy Henry's little girls, don't you, Abitha?" responded Mr. Bean. "Well, it has been real pleasant having them here this winter, but I suppose when spring comes we will have to say good-bye. Their mother and father will want them then, I reckon."

"Why don't their mother and father come here?" questioned Abitha. "This is the best place in the world to live, and both the children are as happy here as they can be. I believe I shall write to Henry myself."

"I'm expecting an answer to the letter I sent him a spell ago," remarked Mr. Bean, and the father and daughter both laughed as if sure that their letters would persuade Mr. and Mrs. Henry Neuman to come at once to Pine Tree farm.

## CHAPTER XIII

### RATS IN THE SPARE ROOM

LITTLE Mary Woodyear was sure that no other little girl ever had such a wonderful ride as the one behind "Jet" in the little red sleigh beside Constance. The pony kept close behind the big double sleigh, and Jimmy Woodyear kept looking behind to admire and praise "Jet's" dancing steps.

"You can drive 'Jet' if you want to, Jimmy," Sister called out, "and I'll ride with the others."

Jimmy's thin little face fairly beamed as he got into the little sleigh and took the reins, and Sister looked just as happy as she got into the back seat of the big sleigh and helped Lamb keep the baby Woodyear well wrapped up.

"Ain't it lovely, Jimmy!" whispered little Mary, and Jimmy nodded. He was thinking that nothing as fine as this had ever happened to him before in all his life.

Miss Abitha was looking out for them when they reached the farm and picked up the baby and ran into the house with it. Mr. Eben Bean took the four-year-old Woodyear and carried her in, and Mary and Jimmy followed.

Grandmother had a hot lunch all ready for them. Chocolate with whipped cream on top, little chicken

pies hot from the oven, gingerbread hearts and rounds, and baked apples that were almost like jelly.

There was warm bread and milk for the baby, and the children were all hungry enough to enjoy the luncheon.

After they had finished Eben appeared at the door and asked Jimmy if he would not like to see "Jet" unharnessed; and the delighted boy hurried off to the barn. Sister and Lamb took their little guests into the sitting-room where the two youngest exclaimed happily over "Fluff" and "Blossom," and little Mary was made happy by having "Jabezza" and "Betty" to hold; while Sister and Lamb told her about taking the dolls to Miss Abitha's school.

In a little while Jimmy came back, and then grandmother brought in a great pan full of delicious cornballs, and Miss Abitha said she was going to tell them stories. So she picked up the baby Woodyear, and sat down in the little rocking-chair near the fire and told them the wonderful story of an entire family who were wrecked on a desert island; and built a house, made furniture, tamed wild animals, and were much happier than when at home.

When the story was finished the baby was fast asleep. Lamb and Mary and Constance and Jimmy tiptoed softly out of the room, and then ran out in the shed to see Constance's work bench. The time went so quickly that when Mr. Eben Bean called out that it was time to start for home, Jimmy and Mary could



MISS ABITHA TOLD THEM A STORY





hardly believe that the happy day was over; and when Miss Abitha handed Jimmy a new pair of mittens, and asked him if he would take care of her sled for her until she wanted it again, the boy was almost too happy to thank her.

"I never had a sled," he said.

"This is yours, Jimmy," said Miss Abitha, and the boy kept fast hold of the rope all the way home.

The youngest Woodyears were dressed up in their new clothes, but were too sleepy to know what had happened to them.

"It's almost like Christmas," said little Mary, as she bade them good-bye.

"Grandmother," whispered Constance, as Eben drove off with his happy load, "grandmother, I gave my dollar to Mary Woodyear to buy her a doll with. Do you know, grandmother," and Constance's voice was very solemn, "there isn't a doll in that family."

"I declare," replied grandmother. "I wonder Abitha hadn't found it out before this."

"Lamb," said Constance, as the sisters were putting "Jabezza" and "Betty" to bed, "February begins tomorrow, and we must begin taking up tacks right away. We'll have to take up some evenings. I've brought up two chisels from my work bench that will be just right to pry up tacks with."

"I don't want to clean house evenings," objected Lamb; "and it will be so cold in those shut up rooms."

"We'll have to begin in the shut up rooms," insisted Constance; "for grandmother doesn't go in those rooms very often, and we can probably get the tacks all up and get the carpets all out of doors before she knows it."

Lamb's face brightened a little, and Constance continued, "We can put on our coats so as to keep warm. Let's take up a few tacks to-night."

Lamb agreed reluctantly, and Constance took the lamp from the stand and tiptoed across the hall. Lamb followed carrying the two chisels.

The big spare room looked very dark and shadowy as the children pushed the door open and went in. Constance set the lamp on a table. "We'll begin right in this corner," she whispered, and the two little girls knelt down and began looking for the tacks that held the pretty carpet so smoothly in place. Their chisels slipped now and then and made little clicking noises, but they worked busily on.

Grandfather and Grandmother Neuman reading by the sitting-room fire, directly under the spare room, heard these queer little noises.

"There's rats in this house," declared grandfather; "sounds to me as if they were right over our heads."

"So it does," agreed grandmother. "I believe I will put 'Fluff' and 'Blossom' in the spare room and see if they can find any trace of rats."

The little clicking and scraping noise went on for some time, much to Mrs. Neuman's displeasure; for it

seemed to her an army of rats had taken possession of her house.

But Constance and Lamb were delighted when they found that every tack on one end of the room was out. "We can get them all out in two nights more," whispered Constance, as they crept softly back to their own warm comfortable room.

The next day when the children were at Miss Abitha's, grandmother carried "Fluff" and "Blossom" up-stairs, and opening the door of the big chamber, set the kittens inside. "There," she said; "now if those nibbling rats are running about the kittens will soon find it out. I won't give them their supper to-night and that will make them more anxious to look after the rats."

Mrs. Neuman did not tell the little girls where the kittens were, so when Constance tiptoed carefully into the front chamber that night, with Lamb close behind her, they did not think that there was any living thing in the room except themselves, and set busily to work.

In a few moments a little rustling noise attracted Lamb's attention. Something seemed to be moving about the room. "Sister," she whispered, "do you suppose there's anything in this room?"

Sister nodded. "I guess it's rats," she responded; "and seems to me they must be big ones, for I can hear them move about."

"Oh-h," whimpered Lamb; "I'm most scared, Sister." Just then "Fluff" made a little bound toward

the children and lighted right on Lamb's shoulder. With a smothered scream Lamb stumbled against her sister and they both fell over in a frightened heap.

"Oh, Sister, Sister, they have regular claws," moaned Lamb, hiding her face on Constance's back, for Constance had fallen face downward on the floor.

"My soul!" exclaimed grandmother, as the sound of the disturbance came to her ears; "that can't be rats or cats, it sounds just like the children," and followed by Mr. Neuman she hurried up the stairs and into the front room.

"Oh, grandmother," wailed Lamb, "there's rats all over this room. There's a big one jumped on me." At the sound of their grandmother's step both the children had sprung to their feet and hurried to meet her.

Grandmother looked at them in surprise. "What in the world are you children doing in this room with your coats on?" she exclaimed.

"Oh, grandmother, we thought it was rats——" began Sister.

"I see! I see!" chuckled Grandfather Neuman. "Why, Eunice, these children heard the kittens and were brave enough to come in and see what the trouble was, and thoughtful enough to put on their coats;" and grandfather looked at them admiringly.

"We wasn't brave, we were frightened," responded Constance.

"Well, well," said grandfather; "it was only your

own kittens you heard, and they have scampered off. Grandmother, you just put these brave children to bed and I'll look about the room and see if I find any signs of rats." So grandmother hurried Lamb and Sister into their own warm room, and grandfather peered into the spare-room closet, looked about the room, and decided that everything was all right and told grandmother so when she came back to the sitting-room.

"Not many girls would have dared to go into a room where they heard strange noises," said grandfather proudly, warming his hands before the cheerful blaze.

"And not many children would be so thoughtful as to put on their coats before going into a cold room," responded grandmother; "it won't be long before house-cleaning time now, and then I will give that room a careful looking over."

"It sounded to me as if the rats were working in the walls," decided grandfather.

In spite of grandmother's words of praise at their courage and thoughtfulness neither Sister nor Lamb felt very happy as they lay in their warm bed and watched the flickering glow of the fire.

"We couldn't tell her, could we, Sister?" whispered Lamb; "and they didn't ask us what we were doing anyway. They just said how brave and thoughtful we were, and hurried us right to bed."

Sister gave a little sigh in response. "Well," she replied, "we will have to get up early mornings after



this. And just as soon as the rooms are clean then we will tell them all about it."

"But I don't like to get up early," objected Lamb. "I will, though," she added quickly, "because if the house is all cleaned grandmother will be so pleased that she will write to our mother about it, and say she wants us all to live here always; won't she, Sister?"

"Yes," said Sister, and then with a little giggle, "Wasn't it funny, Lamb, that they thought we were rats?"

## CHAPTER XIV

### HOUSE-CLEANING BEGINS

WITHIN a week the tacks had been removed from the carpets in the three up-stairs chambers, and Sister and Lamb were only waiting for an opportunity to drag the carpets from the floors and out-of-doors. Sister had suggested that it would be an excellent plan to shake the carpets from the chamber windows.

"It would be much easier," she explained; "and if there happened to be a wind blowing why it would sweep the dust all out."

"So it would," said Lamb, who generally agreed with all of Constance's suggestions.

Mr. and Mrs. Neuman concluded that the rats had been frightened away, so the chambers remained undisturbed except for the morning visits of the two little girls.

"I guess Henry isn't making any plans about coming to Pine Tree farm to live," said Grandfather Neuman one day in February. "In this last letter he thanks us for all our generous plans for him, but he says he has had a fine business offer that just suits him and thinks it will be wise to accept it."

Grandmother Neuman sighed as she read the letter.

"It does not look very encouraging, does it, Jabez?" she responded; "but he says he is glad that the children are so happy, and that he will give us a month's notice before taking them away."

"Mother doesn't write a word about coming," Constance said that very day, for a long letter had also come for the children; "but she says that she is glad we can have a garden, so that looks as if we could stay a long time."

"And she says to be sure and do all we can to help grandma," added Lamb. "I guess if she knew about those carpets all ready to go outdoors, and all we have planned so that grandmother wouldn't have any hard house-cleaning to do, I guess if our mother knew that she would be real pleased."

"Well," Constance replied, "grandmother will tell her about it when she comes, and then she will be just as surprised!"

Mr. Eben Bean and Miss Abitha listened to Mr. Neuman's account of Henry's business offer, but had nothing to say. Mr. Eben Bean had also received a letter from the children's father, and Miss Abitha had read it, but they did not speak of it.

Early in March Miss Abitha began to tell the children about gardens, and one afternoon she had a small box of seeds to show them. The tomato seeds were in one paper, onion seeds in another, and turnip seeds in another; and on each of the papers was a picture of what the seed would grow to be. Then, too, there

were hollyhock seeds, sweet peas, nasturtiums, and numerous kinds of flowers.

Sister looked over the vegetable seeds with much interest.

"Grandfather said I was to have the useful garden," she announced; "so I suppose that means vegetables, but where are your potato seeds, Miss Abitha?"

This made Miss Abitha laugh. "I declare," she said, "I forget that you poor little chicks have never lived in the country and don't even know about potatoes. Wait just a minute and I will show you what you plant for potatoes," and she took a small basket and went down in the cellar.

When she came back the basket was full of potatoes, and on some of them little whitish green sprouts were growing. Miss Abitha got a knife and both the little girls watched her eagerly.

"These potatoes have begun to sprout already," she said. "Now when we want to plant potato seed we pick out nice potatoes with eyes, see!" and she held up a long potato with black specks at each end, and, with a stroke of her knife cut it in two.

"There, now there is potato seed. It will not be long before father and Mr. Neuman will be getting potatoes ready to plant; then you can go into the field and drop the seed into the 'hills' that they will have all ready. Perhaps you can drop corn, too," explained Miss Abitha.

"I wish it was time to plant things now," said Lamb.

"Well," responded Miss Abitha, "I'll see if father can't get us some boxes of nice rich earth and to-morrow we will plant some tomato seeds; then the young plants will be ready to put out of doors in good season."

"Can't we plant some flower seeds too?" urged Lamb.

"Of course we can. Sweet peas and nasturtiums and mignonette."

The little girls were so interested in their garden lessons that house-cleaning was almost forgotten until one morning Grandmother Neuman said: "I must send word to the village for Mrs. Welch to come over next week and take up the chamber carpets and begin on my house-cleaning." Then Sister decided that there was no time to lose.

"We must get those carpets out this very day," she announced to Lamb; "and then we must wash up the floors, take the things out of the closets, and clean the windows."

"So we must," agreed Lamb.

"Perhaps it will be better if we put the carpets out of the windows this afternoon and let them flop all night," continued Sister; "then probably they will be clean enough in the morning to put down as soon as we get the floors washed."

That afternoon, directly after school, both the little

girls hurried up-stairs to begin work. They put on the gingham aprons that Grandma Neuman had made for them, and looked about the large front chamber.

"It will be dreadful hard to get the carpet out from under that big bed, won't it, Sister?" suggested Lamb.

"No," answered Sister vigorously; "the bed is on wheels; see, it rolls just as easy."

But it took a good deal of pushing and pulling to get the carpet from under the big bureau. The chairs and table had to be pushed close to the bed, and by the time they had drawn the carpet near the side window both the girls were dusty and tired. They had scratched their hands on the tacks, and Lamb's apron was torn.

"Those muslin window curtains are awfully in the way," grumbled Sister.

"Tie them up!" said Lamb, and Sister immediately tied up the spotless draperies in a series of knots that afterward proved very difficult to undo.

Grandmother called them to supper before their labors were finished, and when the two dusty faced children came into the neat kitchen she exclaimed in dismay:

"What have you children been doing? Run right up-stairs and wash your faces and brush your hair. I declare," she continued, as Sister and Lamb disappeared, "this is the first time I ever saw those children look dirty. I suppose it's this gardening idea."



"But I thought they were up-stairs!" said grandfather. "Well, they look happy, anyway; so it's all right," and he and grandmother smiled at each other.

The little girls were back again in a few minutes all ready for supper; and grandfather told them of a new bossy that was in the barn, and he said that the frost was going out of the ground so fast that Eben would be able to do some plowing in a few days.

"We must see about a wagon for 'Jet,'" declared Grandfather. "That little red sleigh won't be of much use until next winter, but you'll need a wagon very soon now." The children listened happily. Every day seemed to bring some new pleasure; and they were glad that they had made such a good start toward helping grandmother over the house-cleaning time.

They went up-stairs early and, remembering about the "rats," crept quietly into the front chamber. Sister raised the end window as softly as possible and then they both tugged and pulled the carpet up from the floor. They pushed it through the open window until about two-thirds of it hung outside.

"Now," whispered Sister, "I'll shut the window down right on the carpet and that will hold it. And it will flap lovely all night, and in the morning it will be just as clean."

"Oh, yes!" responded Lamb; "but, Sister, look at these papers all over the floor! We must take those up. What will we do with them?"

"We can throw them right out of the window," declared Sister, and in a few moments there was a swish and crackle of newspapers as they went swirling out of the open window.

Grandfather Neuman was just getting ready for bed when he heard this unusual noise.

"I believe we are going to have a bad storm, Eunice," he said. "I don't know as I ever heard the wind make just that noise before."

"My!" exclaimed grandmother, who had lifted the curtain and was peering out, "and it's dark as Egypt. Why, Jabez, it looks exactly as if a big dark curtain hung over the window. I believe we are going to have a gale of wind before morning."

The carpet hung almost over the window from which grandma looked; and all night long it swung and flopped against the house. The papers rustled and blew about in the yard, and, hearing these unusual noises, Mr. and Mrs. Neuman were sure that a storm of some sort was in progress. It seemed unusually dark the next morning and when grandfather raised the curtain at the end window he exclaimed in dismay:

"Eunice! Something has happened to the roof. Look at this!"

Grandmother ran to the window and looked out.

"It's my spare room carpet!" she exclaimed. "Do you suppose that burglars have got in?"

"There's been queer sounds all night!" responded

grandfather. "I hope those poor children have not been frightened."

Mr. and Mrs. Neuman hurried up the stairs and looked anxiously into the little girls' chamber. Both Sister and Lamb, tired out by "house-cleaning," were fast asleep. Sister's short hair made her grandfather remember how anxious she had been to please him and he whispered, "Peter." Then they went across the entry and opened the door into the spare room.

"My soul!" exclaimed Mrs. Neuman. "I never saw the beat of this! Look at those curtains! And what on earth has become of the floor papers! Jabez, this means burglars!"

"I'm afraid it does," muttered grandfather, looking carefully about; "but I can't see that anything has been taken. The window is shut fast on the carpet, and what on earth would they knot the curtains up like that for, and take the tacks all out of the carpet?"

"The papers are flying all over the yard," announced grandmother. "Just push the rest of the carpet out of the window, Jabez. If people go by and see our house looking this way I don't know what they will think, I'm sure."

"I never heard of anything like it," declared grandfather. But grandmother's surprise seemed to vanish when she saw two blue checked gingham aprons lying on a chair.

"Sister and Lamb did this!" she said picking up the aprons. "Don't you remember how dusty and

tired they were last night? And the night when we put the kittens in here! Those children were taking up tacks that very night I do believe; and we thought it was rats!"

"But they didn't tell us," and grandpa's face grew anxious. "I can't believe those children would do such mischief as this," he declared.

"I don't believe they intended mischief," responded grandmother; "but I can't imagine what they were trying to do. We'll just wait and see," and Mr. and Mrs. Neuman went down-stairs.

It was a late breakfast that morning and before they had finished Miss Abitha came running in.

"Mrs. Neuman!" she exclaimed, "your spare room carpet is on the ground, and papers are blowing about everywhere. What has happened?"

"Just step up to the spare room, Abitha," responded Mr. Neuman, "and see what you think has happened."

"Oh!" exclaimed Sister and Lamb.

"Oh, we are cleaning house!" and they wondered why grandmother looked so sober, and why grandfather did not smile, and Miss Abitha have something to say instead of looking at them so gravely.

"We wanted to surprise grandmother!" explained Lamb.

"We took the tacks out of the carpet evenings," continued Sister; "and to-day we were going to wash the floor and clean the windows."

"We thought you'd be pleased;" there was an

accusing note in Lamb's voice. It had been cold and difficult work to take up all those tacks. It had not been easy to drag the carpet up, and move the furniture and now no one had a word of praise for them. Lamb began to wish that she was in California with her mother and father, and tears were gathering in Sister's eyes.

It was Miss Abitha's laugh that made the little girls forget their disappointment. And when grandfather said "my Peter," and put his arm about Constance, and grandmother smiled and said, "There! I never knew such good children," and kissed Lamb; why, then both the little girls were comforted and began to smile.

"Didn't we do it right, grandpa?" whispered Constance, "or was you all so surprised?"

"My idea," responded grandfather with great firmness, "is that house-cleaning is all wrong, however you do it," and Miss Abitha laughed again and said, "I think so, too."

"Eben will have to hitch right up and go after Mrs. Welch," declared grandmother, "and get that room in order to-day. You children can ride to the village with Eben if you want to."

Mr. Eben Bean lifted the little girls to the front seat of the carryall and started for the village.

"More plans gone wrong, Peter?" he asked, and Constance nodded.

"Well," said Mr. Bean, "it looks to me as if it

would come out all right. You planned to please your grandmother, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes," declared Lamb, and Constance nodded again.

"That's what I thought," said Eben; "and she is pleased. She told me while I was hitching up Lion that you were both the most thoughtful children she ever saw, always wanting to help her."

"But we haven't helped her," sighed Sister. "I heard her say the room was in a dreadful muss."

"Getting up a carpet is a good deal of help," announced Eben; "and Abitha tells me that you've got the tacks all out of two other carpets."

"Yes, we have," said Constance, and her voice sounded more hopeful.

"Then," and Eben nodded wisely, "as I look at it you've accomplished a good deal." And Sister and Lamb began to think that perhaps their grandmother might think them a help after all. At the village store Eben discovered some peppermints which he bought for them. Mrs. Welch consented to go right back to the farm with them; and Eben said that he was going to plough up a place for their garden the very next week. By the time they got back to the farm their faces were bright as ever. Grandfather lifted them out of the wagon and gave them each a kiss, and grandmother said it was a great help to have tacks taken out of carpets.

When they went to Miss Abitha's that afternoon



there was a tiny box on each small table. One box was marked "Lamb" and one was marked "Sister," and when they opened the boxes there was a gold ring in each.

"Mine just fits!" exclaimed Lamb, putting her ring on her middle finger.

"And so does mine," said Constance; "and I have been wishing and wishing for a real ring."

"Your father sent you those," explained Miss Abitha. "He sent them to me and told me to give them to you when you had been especially good!"

"And have we been?" questioned Constance.

"Why, yes," answered Miss Abitha, "I think you have."

## CHAPTER XV

### AFTER ARBUTUS

AFTER the seeds were planted in the boxes of warm brown earth and set in Miss Abitha's eastern windows Constance and Lamb went eagerly every day to watch for the tiny green sprouts that Miss Abitha told them would soon appear.

One day Constance exclaimed in dismay: "Oh, Miss Abitha! Something dreadful has happened! The sweet peas have come up seed first!"

"Just the way they should come up, my dear," laughed Miss Abitha, and all along through the centre of that box she pointed out other little sprouts peeping up through the brown earth.

"It really is time for a spring picnic," declared Miss Abitha. "The arbutus must be ready to blossom by this time, and to-morrow is Saturday, just the day for a picnic. So if you will wear good stout shoes and rubbers and take a little basket of lunch we will go after arbutus to-morrow."

"Will grandmother and grandfather and Mr. Eben Bean go too?" asked Lamb.

"No, indeed!" answered Miss Abitha. "We will go by ourselves, and when you see the lovely flowers we bring home you will think that a spring picnic is

almost as good as a winter picnic. Your father always thought the arbutus was the loveliest flower that grew ; perhaps next year he can go with us after them."

"He doesn't write a word about it," sighed Constance.

Saturday was what Lamb called a "drippy" day. The roofs of the barns and outbuildings steamed in the sun. Little rills of water were making their way down the hill ; and the only snow to be seen was along by the fences.

Grandma waved them good-bye from the porch door. She and Mrs. Welch were busy doing up muslin curtains. Grandfather came out from the stable to say that "Jet" wanted to go too, and Mr. Eben Bean called Shep back. "He might start up a partridge," Mr. Bean said ; "and the spring is so forward that there may be families of little partridges about."

"What are partridges?" questioned Constance, as she walked across the field with Miss Abitha.

"The prettiest, shyest brown bird that ever you saw," replied Miss Abitha. "She doesn't bother to make a nest, because foxes and hawks have a constant eye out for her ; so she just scratches a few leaves together near some old log, or under some friendly bush, and lays her eggs and hatches out a dozen tiny little brown birds just like herself."

"Do you suppose we will ever see a partridge?" asked Lamb.

"Indeed you will if you live at Pine Tree farm," answered Miss Abitha. "And you may see one this very day. I have seen a mother fox and two young foxes in the very pasture where we are going after arbutus. And I have seen partridges there, too. And almost every year I have seen young deer feeding on the young sprouts at the edge of the wood."

"Oh, Miss Abitha!" sighed Lamb happily. "What would we do if we should see all these lovely things to-day!"

Miss Abitha laughed. "We would all stand just as quietly as we could," she replied, "because they are all very shy and frighten very easily; and we would watch them closely so that we would remember how beautiful they are."

"Is a fox beautiful?" asked Constance doubtfully.

"Yes, indeed. A little fox is as dear and cunning as it can be."

"Perhaps we can catch a little fox," said Lamb hopefully.

But Miss Abitha shook her head.

They had climbed the slope back of the barns and were now very near the place where they had the winter picnic. Miss Abitha led them around the big rock where the fire had been.

"Oh! There is our wigwam!" exclaimed Lamb, running toward the little brush house. As she did so a yellow head poked itself from the opening, and a low snarl made the picnickers stop suddenly.

"It is a mother fox," said Miss Abitha. "We must not disturb her," and he drew the little girls away.

"A truly fox!" declared Constance; "but her head was just like Shep's, and she looked ugly."

"That was because she was frightened. Perhaps she has made a home in the little brush house and was afraid that we had come to drive her out."

"We wouldn't hurt her," said Lamb; "but I wish I could see her little foxes."

Further along in the sunny pasture Miss Abitha knelt down on a moss-covered rock and pushed away some low-growing shrubs. "Look here, children!" she said, and Sister and Lamb hastened to kneel beside her, and then they saw the pink, star-faced fragrant arbutus!

Miss Abitha had brought a pair of scissors and cut the tough stems carefully. Lamb and Sister declared they had never seen anything so pretty, and it was not long before they each had a beautiful bunch of the lovely blossoms.

"Some years I have found it late in February," said Miss Abitha, "blossoming right near the snow, perhaps the leaves would be covered with snow. I think there is nothing in all the spring so lovely."

An old log nearly covered with moss and vines lay near and Constance had been looking at it with great attention.

"Wouldn't that be the kind of a place where a mother partridge would lay her eggs?" she asked.

"Why, yes," responded Miss Abitha, "I should think it would be just the place."

And at that moment there came a strange whirring sound, and from the further end of the log a brown bird flew straight up and lit on the branch of a small birch-tree.

"Oh!" exclaimed both of the little girls, and stood very still.

The brown bird kept very still also, and not until Miss Abitha and the children began to move away did it flutter back to the end of the log.

"A fox and a partridge!" exclaimed Constance. "I guess there are not many children who have seen things like that."

"And trailing arbutus, too," said Lamb admiringly.

"I think that I should like to see some luncheon about this time," said Miss Abitha, with a gay little laugh which the children always liked to hear; "and I know a nice sunny place right near here to eat what we brought in our baskets."

"There are mince turnovers, and bread and jelly, and a bottle of milk in our basket," said Lamb.

"There are potatoes in mine," declared Miss Abitha; "and butter and salt and matches."

"Goody. Now it seems like a truly picnic," declared Constance, as the children followed Miss Abitha up a steep little hill. Nearly at the top was a smooth flat rock which Miss Abitha said was on purpose for a table; and near it Miss Abitha made a little circle



of stones for the fire. The children hunted up the driest wood they could find and Miss Abitha soon had the potatoes roasting on the hot rocks.

They could look down toward Pine Tree farm, and beyond the road and the fields they could see the glimmer of the river.

"When your mother and father come we will have a river picnic," said Miss Abitha.

"Perhaps they won't come," said Lamb. "They may just write for grandfather to take us to the cars, and have us go back all alone. Oh, dear, it seems to me I can't bear to think about going away."

"Don't think about it," laughed Miss Abitha. "Now a prophet is some one who tells what is going to happen. So I will be a prophet and tell you what will happen in June!"

"What will happen?" questioned the little girls eagerly.

"Well, in June your father and mother will come to Pine Tree farm. And your father will say: 'Haven't these children been on a river picnic yet? and you will both shake your head and say 'No.' Then your father will say, 'It's lucky I've come home, for a river picnic is about the best kind of a picnic, and we will all go to-morrow.'

"Then," continued Miss Abitha, "when to-morrow comes the big farm horses will be hitched into the three seated wagon, and all the grown people will ride in that. 'Jet' will be harnessed into his new wagon

and Constance and Lamb will ride in that. And away we will all go down the river road."

"I wish prophets knew, really!" sighed Constance.

"Prophets always know," declared Miss Abitha. "You just wait until June comes and see if I am not the truest of true prophets. Gracious! I believe those potatoes are burning," and she hurried toward the fire and in a few moments they were all busy eating hot roasted potatoes.

After they had finished their luncheon Miss Abitha carefully put out the fire and they started for their walk home. As they went down the hill Miss Abitha suddenly stopped, and motioned to the children to keep still. Then she pointed toward the woods. The children looked and it was all they could do not to cry out with pleasure and surprise, for, close to the wood, they could see a mother deer and two young fawns! They had just come out from the woods and all stood perfectly quiet. The mother deer's beautiful head was lifted as if listening, and the fawns were looking at their mother.

They stood there for a moment and then the doe turned swiftly toward the wood, and the fawns followed.

"There," sighed Miss Abitha, "you will never see anything more beautiful than that."

"Oh!" exclaimed Lamb, "I do wish that we could catch a little deer. Think of all the things we have seen to-day, Sister."

Sister nodded. "It's been the loveliest time," she responded. "We always have lovely times with you," she added, turning an admiring look upon Miss Abitha.

Miss Abitha's thin face flushed happily. "And I have the loveliest times with you," she responded.

Grandfather Neuman came up the field to meet them, and when he heard about the mother fox and the partridge and the deer, he shook his head.

"We will have to look out for our young chickens later on if Master Reynard is raising a family as near as that," he said.

"And grandpa," said Constance, "Miss Abitha is a prophet; and she says that prophets know what is going to happen; and she says that in June my mother and father will come and that we will all go on a river picnic."

"We will hope she is a true prophet," replied grandfather; "and we will have the river picnic anyway."

Grandmother was delighted with the beautiful bunches of arbutus. "Mrs. Welch has got all the cleaning finished," she announced. "It saved us a good deal of time having all those tacks taken up," and she smiled at Constance and Lamb, and both the little girls felt very happy to think that they had really been of use after all.

"I do wish we could catch a little fox and a little deer," said Lamb, as they talked over their wonderful day.

## CHAPTER XVI

### TAMING A FAWN

THE more Lamb thought about the little fawns the more anxious she grew to have one for her very own, and she was sure that a baby fox must be the cunningest of small animals. She questioned Eben about them.

"Mr. Eben Bean, didn't any one ever have tame deer?" she asked.

"Yes, indeed!" responded Mr. Bean, "they tame most too easy. They'll step right into a corn-field and help themselves, and I've known 'em to come right close up to the barns."

"But I mean little deer," persisted Lamb; "could anybody tame a little deer so that it would follow them around, and stay in the barn nights?"

"Yes," said Eben; "some people do that; and then when the deer go back to the woods, as they most always do, it's a bad thing for them. They have got used to people and are not afraid, and when a man comes along with a gun instead of running off as fast as their legs will carry them they stand still and get shot."

"But I wouldn't let my deer go back to the woods," declared Lamb; "I'd keep it in the barn winters. Mr. Eben Bean, would you," and the little girl paused

a moment and looked up into his face pleadingly, "would you help me catch a little deer?"

"I vum!" muttered Eben, looking down into the eager little face; "how do you suppose we could catch a deer?"

Lamb shook her head. "I thought you would know how," she answered.

"Well," said Eben slowly, "I'll tell you what we can do, we can put a passel of salt near the rocks out there where you saw the deer. They like salt and they'll scent it some distance. Then we'll keep watch, and go as near as we can to them. Then the next day we'll take out a bran mash and see how they like that; and every day about the same time we'll carry out something for them to eat. Sliced turnips, or some of those little russet apples like you feed the pony with."

"And then will the deer follow us home?" asked Lamb eagerly.

"No, ma'am!" replied Eben. "But gradually they will get used to us and then perhaps I can manage to get a rope round one of the young deer and catch it!"

"Oh, goody!" exclaimed Lamb. "Can't we carry out the salt to-day?"

"Yes," said Eben, and he went to the stable and came back with a small package of salt, and he and Lamb walked up the hill toward the edge of the wood.

Eben sprinkled the salt near the rocks. Then he and

Lamb went a little further up the slope and waited. In a little while the mother deer appeared at the edge of the woods, closely followed by the two fawns, and instantly made her way toward the place where the salt was sprinkled. She lapped it up eagerly, and did not seem to notice the two quiet figures just beyond. After finishing the salt the deer nibbled about at some young green shoots at the edge of the wood, and then, closely followed by the fawns, disappeared.

"O-oh!" said Lamb, "if I can tame a little deer as a present for my mother when she comes, I'm sure then she will always want to live at Pine Tree farm."

"I shouldn't wonder," responded Mr. Bean.

When Constance heard of Lamb's plan she could hardly wait for the next morning to come to carry out the little russet apples for the fawns. Grandfather Neuman said that he did not think much of tame deer. "They won't stay tame," he declared, but gave his consent to Lamb's plan to capture one of the fawns.

At the same hour the next morning both the little girls were out at the barn with a small basket of apples waiting for Mr. Bean. As they walked up the slope Mr. Bean told them that when he was a young man he used to hunt deer.

"One of our tricks to catch them," he said, "was to tie a bag of salt to some birch tree and then hide near by; they'd smell the salt and find the place every time."

Mr. Bean cut the apples in halves and left a few



where the salt had been, then he dropped them along nearly to the place where they would stand to watch for the mother deer.

They did not have long to wait. This time the fawns bounded ahead of the deer. They nosed the apples about but did not touch them until their mother came up, sniffed at the fruit, and began to eat. One little fawn followed up the apple trail and was soon within a few feet of the children. Then Mr. Bean dropped some more apples which the fawn nibbled and when he had finished the last piece he put his pretty head close down to the basket and sniffed hungrily.

"Oh!" exclaimed Lamb, "we can catch it now!" but at the sound of her voice the little creature gave a bound that carried it well out of reach; and in a moment the three were out of sight in the shelter of the woods.

"Lamb Eunice Neuman!" exclaimed Constance reproachfully. "You have frightened them so they will never come back."

"I guess they'll come back, Peter," said Mr. Bean; "but it won't be very long before they will get used to Lamb's voice and won't mind it."

"All three of them?" questioned Lamb hopefully.

"It looks that way now," responded Mr. Bean.

"What is that in our yard?" exclaimed Sister as they came near the barns. "Look, look, Lamb!" and sister started on a run.



THE FAWN SNIFFED THE BASKET HUNGRILY



"Oh, Mr. Bean!" said Lamb, and she, too, began to run across the field. Mr. Bean smiled as he watched them. "I guess their father will find two happy children when he does come," he said to himself.

As the little girls neared the farmyard they could see Grandfather Neuman leading "Jet" around the yard. A fine new saddle was on the pony's back and on the saddle was something that Constance at first thought was a little girl, but, as she drew nearer she could see that it was a bag filled with straw and tied on the saddle.

"Well! Well!" exclaimed grandfather as both the little girls ran toward him. "So the deer-hunters have returned. 'Jet' thought it was time that he had some attention so I have bought him a new saddle. How do you like it?" And Mr. Neuman removed the bag of straw so that the children could see the pretty new saddle. It was of light brown leather, and it had shining silver stirrups, and both Lamb and Sister were sure that it was the finest saddle in the world.

"'Jet' is as proud of it as if he had picked it out himself," said grandfather, as he lifted Sister on to the pony's back and adjusted the stirrups. Then he led "Jet" down the road a little way; coming back he did not hold the bridle but let Sister guide the pony herself. Then it was Lamb's turn, and when grandfather said it was time to take off the saddle and let "Jet" rest, the little girls were sure that riding horseback was the greatest fun they had ever enjoyed.

But Lamb did not forget about the fawn, although Constance declared she would much rather ride "Jet" than tame any fawn in the world, and the next morning when Lamb and Mr. Bean started for the woods Constance was all ready for another ride.

"After I catch the fawn then I'll ride," Lamb declared happily, as she filled the little basket with apples, and put in some tiny sweet cookies that grandmother said any deer would be sure to like.

"Oh! Mr. Eben Bean!" whispered Lamb, as they went up the slope, "they are waiting for us!" And sure enough, there stood the two fawns and their mother very near the spot where the apples had been put on the previous day.

Mr. Bean nodded and they walked quietly on. When they were quite near the mother deer moved away and the fawns followed. Then Mr. Bean stopped and dropped several of the apples. They went on and in a few minutes the fawns were munching the apples while the mother deer looked on as if uncertain as to the wisdom of being so near to human beings.

Lamb held out one of the sweet cakes in her hand but could not persuade the fawns to come as near as that. When they started for home, however, the fawns followed them for some distance nibbling the little cakes that Lamb dropped one by one along the path.

"Now if we can keep Shep from frightening them

"I guess your deer are good as tamed," said Mr. Bean. "I expect they'll be considerable of a nuisance, too, as the garden stuff begins to grow," and he shook his head as if discouraged at the prospect.

Every morning for two weeks Lamb went up the slope with some dainty for the fawns, and every day they would follow her nearly to the big barns, and as she entered the farmyard they would turn and bound back toward the woods.

"When my mother comes in June and sees how tame the deer are I guess she'll be real pleased," declared Lamb.

"And when she sees me riding horseback she'll be pleased," added Sister; for Sister found the new saddle and the pony more attractive than taming fawns, and rode so well that she had already been to the village on an errand for Grandmother Neuman.

The lilacs were beginning to bud, Miss Abitha was transplanting her tomato plants, and Mr. Neuman and Eben were busy in the fields when Sister and Lamb first persuaded the fawns to come into the farmyard. Shep had been safely shut up. The little girls had been out on the slope and the fawns had followed them home. The mother deer nibbled along near at hand entirely unsuspecting of the children's plan. The gate of the yard was open and the fawns went through, one of them eating a sweet apple which Lamb had just given it. On went the children toward the big barn and the fawns followed. Just inside the



open doorway stood a trough of freshly mixed meal, and it did not take the fawns long to find out that it was good to eat. Then Constance and Lamb closed the barn door and scampered toward the house to wait Grandfather Neuman's return.

"I declare!" exclaimed Grandmother Neuman admiringly when she heard **the** story, "I don't believe there are two other children in the state of Maine that could catch two fawns."

"They will be a lovely present for our mother when she comes," said Lamb. "I wish we could have caught a little fox for father," she added regretfully.

"Pity sakes!" exclaimed Mrs. Neuman, "don't try to tame a fox. We are pestered to death with them now."

The mother deer waited about the farmyard until nearly dusk, when Shep's appearance frightened her away. Mr. Neuman and Eben made a stall for the fawns. Grandfather said it would be safer to keep them shut up for a time; and every day the children went out to the barn and fed and petted the little creatures who seemed quite happy and content in their new quarters.

For several days the mother deer came up close to the barns as if looking for her children, but after a while she was not seen and Mr. Bean said she had probably started off for a journey.

"Can we let the fawns out now?" questioned Lamb eagerly.

"Not just yet," replied grandfather. "Eben is going to fix a little yard for them in the corner of the field." The next day Eben put up some strong posts and ran wire netting around an enclosure where the fawns could feed and play. He fixed a brush shelter in one corner where they could go when it rained.

"We ought to name the fawns," Constance suggested one morning when she and Miss Abitha and Lamb had been feeding the pretty creatures. "What could we call them, Miss Abitha?"

"'Fleet' and 'Sweet,'" answered Miss Abitha quickly, and Lamb and Sister looked at her admiringly.

"You think of just the right things," said Lamb.

"Of course I do!" laughed Miss Abitha. "But there is something I nearly forgot, and that is your gardens! What do you suppose your mother will say when she comes in June not to find any garden?"

"Do you think it's much use to make a garden?" questioned Constance. "I heard grandfather say that our father didn't say a word about coming; and that probably he would send for us to go to Boston and not come to the farm at all. So if we make a garden mother and father won't see it!"

"Oh, Sister!" wailed Lamb, "you talk just as if we'd got to go away and leave our fawns, and the pony, and Miss Abitha and everything."

"So we have," declared Constance gloomily; "unless our mother and father come here."

Miss Abitha's face was all smiles. "You just make

the garden," she commanded. "Didn't I tell you that I was a prophet? Well, I prophesy that some morning you'll wake up and find that your dear mother and father are both at Pine Tree farm. Now, let's see where grandmother wants a flower garden!"

"And a vegetable garden," added Sister more hopefully. "You know I want to plant a garden that will be useful."

"Of course you do," agreed Miss Abitha.

Mrs. Neuman thought that the plot in front of the house would be just the place for Lamb's garden, and it was decided that Peter's garden should be close at hand, only toward the side of the house.

Grandfather approved of her decision, and the next morning Eben spaded up the two plots of ground.

"I believe I'll get the Woodyear boy to come over and help," said Mr. Neuman. "He can come in the morning and go home at night, and he seems like a smart boy."

"That's a good idea," declared Eben heartily; "he can take care of the pony, and save me a good many steps."

"We must see about that pony cart," remarked Mr. Neuman. "I've been hoping to get some word from Henry to say what his plans were, but he don't write a word about coming."

Mr. Eben Bean smiled, but he made no response. Mr. Neuman thought to himself that Eben didn't care much if Henry came home or not.

"Lamb," exclaimed Sister that night as they walked around their garden plots before going in to supper, "there's something that grandmother and grandfather have forgotten all about."

"The pony cart?" questioned Lamb.

Sister shook her head. "No, they haven't forgotten about that for grandfather said he was going to Bangor after it next week. Can't you think, Lamb?" she concluded reproachfully.

"No," replied Lamb, "I can't."

"They have forgotten about the top shelf," declared Sister solemnly.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A DAY OF SURPRISES

JIMMY WOODYEAR was very glad of the chance to help Eben. He came early in the morning and drove the cattle to pasture; led old Lion and Jet down to the brook for their morning drink, and then hurried away to the field to help Eben with the planting. When he saw the fawns and heard the story of how they were captured he thought it was very wonderful.

"You could sell those fawns to a circus," he announced, as he and Constance and Lamb walked round the enclosure where the young deer seemed very happy and contented.

"Oh! We wouldn't," exclaimed both the little girls. "They are a present for our mother."

Jimmy nodded. "But what are you going to do with them when they grow up?" he questioned. "If your mother goes away she can't take 'em. I should sell 'em."

Just then Eben called "Jimmy!" and the boy hurried away.

"We can keep them just as well as not if they do grow up," announced Constance. "They can stay in the big barn and eat hay winters with the cows; and summers they can go to pasture."

"Yes," agreed Lamb; "but suppose mother doesn't want to live here. I know grandmother wants us to stay because she says so, but mother or father don't write a word about coming."

"Well," said Sister, "let's make our gardens just as blossomy and pretty as we can, and learn to do everything we can and keep writing to mother to come; and then when she does come she'll think that everything is so lovely that she will want to stay."

"But a vegetable garden can't be very blossomy," objected Lamb.

"You wait and see," said Sister. "I'm going to plant nasturtiums all around the edge. Then I'm going to have a row of tomatoes, then a row of sweet peas, then a row of potatoes, and then a row of mignonette."

"Oh, Sister! That will be lovely!" declared Lamb. "I wish I could have some vegetables in mine."

Sister shook her head. "No," she responded, "perhaps you could have a little border of sage, for that is pretty and it is useful too. Grandmother says that all good housekeepers raise sage."

Every day as the two little girls worked in their garden they wondered and talked about the top shelf in the sitting-room closet.

"I guess there isn't anything on it," decided Constance. "You see, Lamb, there were so many things on those other shelves that I can't think of a single thing left that we want."



"I can," declared Lamb. "There's something I want; but it couldn't be on a top shelf, and you needn't ask me what it is, Sister, because I'm not going to tell."

"Is it too big to go on a top shelf?" questioned Constance.

Lamb shook her head. "No, it's as little, as little as this," and she drew a small circle in the soft earth, "and I shan't ever tell what it is, because it's something that little girls don't have. But just as soon as I grow up I shall have one."

"Is it a locket?" questioned Sister.

"Little girls most always have lockets," responded Lamb. "No, I don't want a locket."

"Well," declared Constance, "whatever it is that you want it wouldn't s'prise me a bit if it was on that top shelf. But I guess grandmother has been so busy she has forgotten it."

That very night grandfather said: "Well, Peter, now that planting is well under way I have decided to have a birthday."

"Of your own?" questioned Peter.

"My very own," answered grandfather; "and when a birthday comes in this family the person who has it has to give everybody else a good time. He has to make presents to all the family; and if he knows of any poor people he has to see that they have a good dinner."

"The Woodyears?" suggested Lamb.

"Exactly," replied grandfather. "On Thursday the Woodyears will have a good roast of beef and plum pudding for their dinner and Jimmy Woodyear will have a present of a silver dollar."

"Don't you have any presents?" asked Constance.

Grandfather shook his head. "I have had a present of three hundred and sixty-five happy days," he said; "so it is my duty to be thankful on my birthday and make that day a happy one for other people."

"Yes," said grandmother; "and the new pony-cart will be here as a present for 'Jet'; and we shall have to open the sitting-room closet and see what we can find on the top shelf."

"Goody," exclaimed both the little girls. "We were afraid that you had forgotten about the top shelf."

"I had hoped Henry would be home for this birthday," said grandmother.

Grandfather Neuman looked very grave for a moment, then he said hopefully, "Well, we must hope that he will get here by the second of June, in time for your birthday, mother. And then we will celebrate by going on a river picnic."

June was only a month away, but grandfather's birthday would come in two days so both Constance and Lamb were eager for Thursday to come.

"Will our presents, our birthday presents that you give us on your birthday, be on the top shelf?" questioned Lamb.

Grandfather nodded smilingly. "Yes, and I guess grandmother will find hers there too."

"Now, Jabez," said grandmother, a little flush coming into her cheeks, "I don't want you to buy me anything."

"All bought, my dear," chuckled grandfather.

Thursday morning proved bright and pleasant, and directly after breakfast Mr. and Mrs. Neuman and Lamb were seated in the carryall ready to start for the village. Constance was to ride "Jet" over. The new pony carriage was waiting for him at the railway station and he would draw it home.

The basket for the Woodyear family occupied the back seat with Lamb, and besides the roast beef and plum pudding it contained a fine frosted cake and some freshly baked bread.

Miss Abitha ran down to her gate to call out her good wishes as they drove by, and in the lower field Eben and Jimmy waved their hats.

"I guess this is going to be the best birthday of the entire sixty," said grandfather.

"The next one will be better," declared Lamb. "I'm most sure it will, grandfather, for then father will be home; and Sister and I will be a year older and know lots more than we do now."

Grandfather turned around to nod and smile at the little girl.

"I guess I'd be most too happy to have so many pleasant things come true. There is Mr. Smith wav-

ing to us; I suppose that means that the pony-cart is here," and Mr. Neuman drove toward the station.

"Here ye be," announced Mr. Smith. "Have ye decided to bring up those children, Mr. Neuman?"

"We have decided that we want to," responded Mr. Neuman, and when Lamb heard her grandfather say that she called out to Constance:

"Oh! Sister. Hurry and hear what grandfather says," and when Sister rode "Jet" close up to the carryall Lamb leaned out and said: "Grandfather wants to bring us up!"

"I know it," answered Constance; "if father will only come home so we can stay here."

"Oh, Constance," said Lamb, "you think up such lovely plans, can't you think up one to get him to come home?"

"Ssh"—said Sister; "I've got a plan."

But just then the new pony-cart was drawn out from the freight house and both the little girls hurried to look at and admire it.

The wheels were painted a dark shining red, the body of the cart was of basket work, and it was cushioned in soft brown leather. "Jet" seemed as proud of it as if he had selected it himself, and when he was harnessed into the shafts he danced about as if to show his pride and approval.

"Now we'll drive round by the Woodyears' and leave their basket," said grandmother; and she and

grandfather started ahead while the little girls in the new wagon followed.

"What is your plan, Sister?" Lamb asked eagerly, as soon as they had started.

"You mustn't tell anybody," began Constance; "not Miss Abitha or anybody, because I want it to be a surprise for grandmother."

"I won't tell," promised Lamb eagerly.

"Well," and Constance looked at Lamb soberly, "I'm going to telegraph. I'm going to write on one of those yellow papers at the telegraph office window, 'Henry, come home at once,' and send it. Then father will think that grandfather wants him and he'll come as fast as he can come."

Lamb did not exclaim as Constance had expected. She was silent a minute and then she said, "Sister, you have to pay money to telegraph. I heard a man ask Mr. Smith to-day how much it cost to telegraph to Boston. And he said thirty cents. It would cost a lot to telegraph to California."

"Oh, dear, are you sure, Lamb?"

Lamb nodded. "Yes, I'm sure. I saw the man give Mr. Smith the money."

"Perhaps Mr. Smith reads what people write on these yellow papers," suggested Constance; "and if he does he might tell grandfather and that would spoil everything."

"I guess Mr. Smith is too polite to read other folks' messages," objected Lamb. "He prob'ly just sends

them right along; but I guess your plan won't do, Sister."

"It's a good plan," declared Sister; "and I'm going to think some way to pay for a telegram, and some way so Mr. Smith can't read it."

"Oh, do, Sister," responded Lamb hopefully; "then everything will be lovely."

"Just wait," announced Sister. "I'll think some way."

The Woodyear children came out to admire the pony-carriage, and little Mary Woodyear rode down the road a little way with Constance and Lamb.

It was dinner time when they came in sight of Pine Tree farm, and Miss Abitha called to them as they neared her house: "You are all to come over here to dinner. My table is set for seven and I don't propose to be disappointed."

"Of course we will," answered grandfather. "Don't I always eat my birthday dinner in your house?"

Jimmy hurried up to show the bright silver dollar.

"I wish I had one," sighed Constance.

"So do I," echoed Lamb, thinking about how much money telegrams to California cost.

Jimmy's bright face clouded. He had never had a dollar of his own before, and he had planned on making his mother a present; but here were Constance and Lamb both wishing for it and Jimmy began to



think that perhaps they ought to have it. Lamb saw his anxious look and said quickly :

"We wouldn't want your dollar, Jimmy, but we want one like it."

"Perhaps your grandfather will give you one," suggested Jimmy.

Constance shook her head.

"Grandfather can't give dollars to everybody," she announced, and Jimmy felt almost guilty that he had so much while these little girls were dollarless.

"Now," said grandfather, when dinner was over, "there is a closet in our sitting-room and in that closet is a top shelf and on that top shelf are packages for every one in this room ; so let's all step over and get our property."

Grandfather was the one to open the closet door and he reached up to the top shelf and took down two small, square packages. One he handed to Mrs. Neuman and one to Miss Abitha. When grandmother opened hers she exclaimed with delight and held up a tiny gold watch.

"I have wanted one all my life !" she said.

"And I've just found it out," said grandfather.

Miss Abitha found a purse in her package and in it some shining gold pieces.

Then came a bundle for Jimmy. In it were two new shirts.

"I guess there isn't anything for us," Lamb whispered to Constance, and just then grandfather reached



up to the top self again and took down two tiny boxes, one for Sister and one for Lamb.

"Oh," exclaimed Lamb, "it looks as if it was — Oh! Sister, it is!" and Lamb opened her box and took out a little round silver watch.

"That's what I was going to get just as soon as I grew up," she declared happily.

There was one for Constance exactly like it, and before they had finished admiring them grandfather handed them each another package.

"Look, look!" exclaimed Constance holding up her last package. "Lamb! It's a silver dollar just like Jimmy's."

"And I have one," responded Lamb joyfully.

The two little girls exchanged a look of perfect understanding, and Constance whispered, "We've got money enough now to send a telegram to father. All we'll have to do is to send it without letting Mr. Smith read it."

"Or else ask him not to tell grandfather," added Lamb.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### SISTER'S TELEGRAM

"SISTER, can't we send that telegram to-day?" questioned Lamb the morning after grandfather's birthday. "You know it takes a whole week to go to California, and perhaps it may take a telegram longer."

Sister shook her head.

"Telegrams go just like lightning," she declared. "All we will have to do is to put the yellow paper into the telegraph window and pay the money, and away it goes, just like a bird."

"Does it truly?" and Lamb looked at her sister doubtfully. "How do you know, Sister?"

"I know because Miss Abitha said so; she got a telegram last week, and I asked her how it came and she said that lightning brought it."

"O—oh!" said Lamb.

"We can ride to the station this afternoon if we want to," continued Constance; "for Miss Abitha wants us to take a note to Mr. Smith, and we will find out more about telegrams."

"Jet" was harnessed into the new wagon and Jimmy stood close by the pony's head until the little girls were seated and Constance had taken up the

reins, then he stepped back and Jet trotted down the driveway and stopped at Miss Abitha's gate, where she was waiting with a letter in her hand.

"Now, Lamb, you keep fast hold of this letter to Mr. Smith because there is a telegram and some money inside. And tell Mr. Smith to read my letter carefully."

The little girls listened eagerly. "Does Mr. Smith read every telegram?" questioned Constance.

"Indeed he does," laughed Miss Abitha; "but every telegram is a secret, Mr. Smith can't tell," and she laughed again, but she wondered why both Lamb and Constance smiled so happily as they drove away.

"Isn't that lovely, Sister!" exclaimed Lamb. "Now we can send the telegram this very morning for I've got my silver dollar right in my pocket."

"So have I," responded Constance; "and we will tie 'Jet' at the post near the store and walk over to the station and give Mr. Smith Miss Abitha's letter, and send our telegram right off."

Lamb bounced up and down on the wagon seat in delight. "Then mother and father will come right off," she exclaimed; "and then we won't ever have to go away. Oh, Sister, I do think your telegram plan is the very best one of all."

The little girls felt very important as they walked into the railway station, and bade Mr. Smith good afternoon.

"Here is a letter from Miss Abitha," said Lamb,

handing the station agent the thick white envelope; "and she wants you to read it very carefully."

The station agent nodded smilingly.

"I guess you two girls like Pine Tree farm, don't you?" he asked; "and I guess your grandfather sets considerable on having you stay there."

"And grandmother does too," added Lamb confidently.

"I shouldn't wonder," agreed Mr. Smith. "All that seems needed now is for your father to come home and settle down. I s'pose it would be quite a surprise to have him get off the train some day and say that he was going to live here, wouldn't it?"

"Are telegrams secret?" questioned Constance, so earnestly that Mr. Smith's smile faded and he looked at the little girl inquiringly.

"Well," he answered slowly, "they be, secret, yes. But if they are agin the government, or a danger to human life or property, I'm expected to use judgment about sending 'em."

"Ours are not those!" declared Lamb. "We want to send a secret telegram, Mr. Smith."

"All right," responded Mr. Smith. "You just write it out on this yellow paper while I start Miss Abitha's message," and he seated himself and began to make little clicking noises on the telegraph instrument.

Constance drew the yellow paper toward her and wrote carefully:

"Henry. Come home at once," and pushed the slip toward Mr. Smith.

"How much will that cost?" she asked.

Mr. Smith read it soberly.

"Well," he responded, "there's certain rules about telegrams. You have to write up there to the top the place where the telegram is to go, and down here at the bottom you'll have to sign your name."

"But we don't want to sign a name," objected Constance.

Mr. Smith shook his head. "That isn't a good plan," he said. "Don't you ever write nothing, letter or telegram, that you don't want to sign your name to."

The little girls were silent for a moment; and then Constance said, "We want our father to come home."

There was a little break in her voice that made Mr. Smith's heart very tender toward the two little girls.

"Of course you do," he replied; "and if I was you I'd just send the telegram this way, 'Father, please come home at once,' and then both of you little girls sign it. I guess he'd come about as quick for that as for any unsigned message."

"Oh, do you think he would?" exclaimed both the children.

Mr. Smith nodded emphatically. "I'm about sure of it," he said.

"And we don't want grandmother and grandfather to know anything about it," said Lamb.

"Of course not," agreed Mr. Smith. "Well, now write the telegram and sign your names, and I'll start it right along. It will cost you fifty cents apiece."

Both the new silver dollars were handed to Mr. Smith and each of the little girls received back a shining half-dollar.

Then they bade Mr. Smith good-bye and started happily for home.

"Everything comes out lovely," declared Constance. "Now mother and father will come, and all because we planned to have them; and grandmother and grandfather will be more glad than ever that we are going to live here."

"And won't Miss Abitha be surprised when she knows that we sent for them our very own selves," responded Lamb. "There's just one more thing, Sister, that I wish we could do."

"What is it?" questioned Constance.

"I do wish we could tame a nice little fox for a present to father. We've got the two fawns for mother and we haven't got a single thing for father."

"Do you think that he would like a little fox?" asked Constance.

"Oh, yes!" answered Lamb, eagerly. "Of course he would. Why, Miss Abitha says there never was anything so cunning as a little fox. And, Sister, I've seen two! Yes, I have, down at the wigwam last week, playing just like kittens. I 'most know I could catch one."

"Then why don't you?" responded Sister. "You needn't bring it up to the house until father comes, but you can tame it and get it all ready to give to father. Perhaps when grandfather sees that it is nice and tame he will change his mind about foxes."

As the little girls talked "Jet" trotted briskly toward home, and just as Constance finished speaking the pony stopped so suddenly that both the little girls lurched forward and called out, "Oh!"

They looked up to see old Lion only a few feet in front of them, and in the wagon sat grandmother and grandfather laughing heartily at the children's surprise.

"You must keep a sharper outlook than that, Peter," said grandfather, as he turned Lion out to one side of the road. "What were you and Lamb so interested in that you couldn't hear a team coming?"

"We were making plans," Lamb answered. "Where are you going, grandfather?"

"I've got a little business with Mr. Smith," answered grandfather. "You go right home; we'll be back soon," and he started Lion on.

"Sister, I'm going right over to the wigwam as soon as we get home," said Lamb, as "Jet" began trotting toward home. "Mr. Eben Bean says that foxes like the same things to eat that dogs do, and Shep likes pieces of meat and chicken bones, so I'll take some over and tame a little fox just the same as we did the fawns."



"Yes," agreed Constance; "and we will keep that as a surprise. I wonder what business grandfather had with Mr. Smith."

"Telegrams are secret," said Lamb reassuringly.

When the station agent saw Mr. Neuman driving up to the depot he whispered, "I vum!" And when Mr. and Mrs. Neuman told him that they wanted to send a telegram to their son, he nodded understandingly.

"We haven't heard from Henry for some time," explained Mr. Neuman; "and we are beginning to fear that his little daughters may get homesick without their mother; so we have decided to telegraph Henry to come home even if it is only for a short visit."

"I see, I see," nodded Mr. Smith.

"And we haven't mentioned it even to Eben," added Mrs. Neuman. "We thought that we would wait until we were sure that Henry was coming before we spoke of it."

"Haven't told the little girls either, I reckon?" questioned Mr. Smith.

"Not a word," replied Mr. Neuman.

"Well, I won't mention it to 'em," said Mr. Smith with a smile; "but I will say that I'll be glad to see Mr. Henry Neuman back where he belongs."

As Mr. and Mrs. Neuman drove away Mr. Smith stood watching them with a puzzled expression.

"It beats all," he said to himself, "how all those folks over at Pine Tree farm think alike. I guess

Abitha's got in a little ahead of the rest of 'em, judging from the telegram Henry sent her last week. Let me see, how did that telegram read," and Mr. Smith rubbed his chin and repeated slowly, "'Will be home for mother's birthday. Surprise for all.' That's it, I guess. And as near as I can make out Abitha thinks she's got a surprise for the old folks, the old folks think they're going to surprise the children, and the children are sure that they are going to surprise everybody," and Mr. Smith chuckled to himself as he walked across the platform and returned to his official duties.

## CHAPTER XIX

### A PRESENT FOR MR. NEUMAN

As soon as Lamb reached home she began to look about for tempting morsels to carry out to the woods for the young foxes. In the shed she found Shep's dish full of chicken bones with bits of meat clinging to them; and these she wrapped carefully in a newspaper and started off on her expedition.

As she walked along the little girl thought of all the pleasant things that had happened since she and Sister came to Pine Tree farm.

"But I believe a tame little fox will be the best of all," thought the little girl.

As she came near the little brush wigwam she heard queer little barks, and as she looked anxiously about, for she did not feel quite sure how a mother fox would feel about having her children enticed toward civilization, she saw the two little foxes lying in the sun near a big rock. They were not playing, as when Lamb had seen them before, and their little yelps had a pitiful sound.

"They sound hungry," decided Lamb, and opening her newspaper she went slowly toward them. They did not run away as the little girl had expected they

would do, but lifted their little pointed noses and sniffed eagerly.

Lamb approached within a few feet of the little creatures, and then she put down the chicken bones and stepped back. The foxes had stopped their little yelps and whines and were upon the tender morsels almost as soon as Lamb had set the paper down. They scrambled eagerly over the bones, their sharp little teeth crunching them up hungrily.

"They wanted something to eat," decided Lamb. "I guess it's lucky I came."

And indeed it was lucky for the little foxes, for they had not seen their mother for two days and were getting very hungry and lonesome. They knew their way to the spring so they had not suffered for water, but they did not know how to secure food, and they were not at all afraid of this small girl who came with such a good luncheon. They wished she had brought more, and they tried to tell her so by sharp little yelps, and by pulling and tearing at the newspaper.

"I'll bring you some more to-morrow," said Lamb. "Oh, dear, I don't see where your mother is. She ought to be here to take care of you," for the little creatures seemed very helpless and alone, and Lamb felt sorry to go and leave them.

"We will have to tame them both," she told Sister on her return to the house. "They are most tame now."

"If that old fox will only stay away," responded

Constance; "we can give them things to eat and they'll learn to follow us just as easy."

"But I guess the little foxes want their mother," objected Lamb.

Every day the little girls carried food to their new pets. Bits of tender meat, bones from Shep's dish, and once or twice saucers of milk which the young foxes seemed to appreciate.

"I'm almost afraid that they'll get too tame," said Lamb one day when the little creatures had insisted on following their new friends beyond the edge of the woods into the open field. "If they follow us up to the house Shep would shake them to pieces."

"My father killed two foxes last week," Jimmy Woodyear announced one morning as he was feeding the chickens.

"Old foxes?" asked Constance.

"Yes," answered Jimmy; "and it's a good thing, too, for father says that foxes are getting to be a regular pest."

"Not nice little yellow foxes," objected Lamb. "P'raps old foxes are a pest, but little ones are just as cunning as kittens."

"Well, they have to grow up," said Jimmy; "and then they are a pest. They catch chickens and do lots of harm."

"Not little foxes," insisted Lamb. "And prob'ly if little foxes were brought up right they wouldn't ever catch a single chicken," and Lamb resolved that

her new pets should receive careful training in regard to chickens.

Constance and Lamb were now very sure that the mother of the little foxes would not come back; and felt a new responsibility in regard to looking after them.

"We will have to tame them now anyway," decided Constance; "and perhaps we had better tell grandfather all about it and have them come right up to the farm to live so that Shep and the chickens can get used to them."

"Perhaps we had," agreed Lamb. "Do you suppose Mr. Eben Bean will make a pen for them?"

"I don't know," responded Constance a little doubtfully; "but when grandfather hears that the little foxes haven't any mother, and are alone down in the woods, I know he will want us to bring them right up to the farm."

"I guess they would follow us all the way home," suggested Lamb. "Let's fasten Shep up and go right after them."

Constance agreed, and, carrying a package of bits of meat the little girls hurried across the fields. The little foxes ran to meet them and jumped about like puppies. They devoured the meat and seemed hungry for more, and ran after the little girls with little yelps as if asking for food.

Mr. Neuman was standing near the gate that opened into the field and when he saw Constance and

Lamb coming followed by two jumping, leaping, happy little yellow foxes, he stared in amazement.

"What on earth!" he exclaimed, and seeing Mrs. Neuman coming across the yard he called to her, "Eunice, Eunice! Come here and look at the children."

Grandmother hurried toward the gate, and as she looked across the field she lifted her hands in dismayed surprise.

"Foxes!" she exclaimed. "Jabez, those children are tolling those creatures right toward our chicken yard!"

Grandfather chuckled. "I wonder where Shep is?" he said. "I guess the foxes are too small to do much harm; but what do the girls want of them, and how do you suppose they made friends with a fox?"

Grandmother did not answer but stood watching the little group.

"It's a pretty sight, Jabez," she said softly; "and I don't suppose such little foxes could do much harm. Like as not Constance and Lamb have set their hearts on keeping them as pets."

"I expect they have," responded grandfather; "but you know, Eunice, that we resolved to be firm with Henry's children, not to spoil them."

"Yes," assented grandmother; "but two little foxes, Jabez! We don't want to be severe, you know, or unreasonable."

"Why, no," said grandfather; "not unreasonable,



of course, but raising young foxes may be against the law for all I know."

By this time Constance and Lamb were very near the gate, and each little girl had managed to catch and hold one of the squirming little foxes.

"Jabez! Jabez!" exclaimed grandmother, "hurry and help the children or those foxes will get away!" and grandfather rushed through the gate and in a moment had both the young foxes safe in his strong grasp, and was hurrying toward the stable closely followed by the two little girls.

"Their mother is shot," explained Constance as they ran along; "and Lamb and I have been feeding them for most a week, and grandfather, we want to keep them for a present for father, can we?"

"We've got the fawns tamed for mother, you know," added Lamb pleadingly.

"Get me a horse blanket, Eunice," commanded grandfather, and grandmother hurried after the blanket, and, seeming to understand just what grandfather would want of it, spread it down in front of the stable door. It did not take Mr. Neuman long to roll the little foxes up in it and carry them into one of the box stalls where he set them at liberty.

"Now we'll see trouble," he declared. "I'll have to fix some sort of a cage for these young nuisances just as soon as I can," and he hurried off to find Eben, while grandmother listened to Lamb's plan.

"Don't you think my father will be real pleased

when he sees how pretty they are?" urged Lamb, and grandmother said of course he would be pleased, and that Eben would fix a nice place for them to live.

"I never saw such children," she said that night after Lamb and Constance were safe in bed. "Just think, Jabez, of their being so kind-hearted about those foxes; and wanting to have a present all ready for their mother and father."

"Well," responded grandfather, "I hope the children won't be disappointed. I hope Henry will come home even if it's only a visit."

"He'll come, father, I'm sure he will, when he gets our telegram," said grandmother; "and there's one thing I'm sure of, he can't say that we have spoiled the children. They have learned a great deal since they came, and better hearted children I never saw."

A little twinkle came into Grandfather Neuman's eyes, but he replied soberly: "We have been as firm as was possible, haven't we, Eunice?"

"Yes," answered grandmother; "but not over-severe, Jabez."

"No," agreed grandfather, "I don't recall that there's anything that they wanted or that we imagined they could want but what we have managed to get for them."

"Now they want their father and mother," said grandmother.

"Well, we'll get 'em here," declared Mr. Neuman.

Eben made a stout box for the foxes, and over the top he fastened wire netting.

"They won't be happy shut up this way," he declared. "You can feed 'em and make of 'em all you want to, but it's their nature to run wild and they'll be miserable shut up."

But Lamb was sure they would soon get used to narrow quarters, and she and Constance decided that they would keep them until their father came, and then if he said that it was best to let the little creatures go back to their wild life why of course they would do so.

"They will be father's, anyway," decided Lamb; "and of course if he wants them to grow up wild why he can let them out."

"And if mother wants to let the fawns out why she can," announced Constance.

"Abitha wants me to have a new dress, a white dress," said Mrs. Neuman, one morning toward the last of May; "she wants me to have the village dress-maker cut and make it so it will be done by my birthday," and Mrs. Neuman laughed as if the idea was too absurd to consider.

"Well, why don't you have it?" responded Mr. Neuman. "Henry always said that you looked prettier in white than any other color."

"That was years ago," said Mrs. Neuman; "but if I was sure Henry would be home this summer I believe I would have a white dress."

"Have it anyway," replied Mr. Neuman; "and get Abitha to have one, too. Make her a present of it and pay the dressmaker's bill. You are going to have a birthday, you know, so she can't refuse."

"Why, I believe I will," agreed grandmother, with a happy little smile and a nod toward grandfather. "And I guess Constance and Lamb would better have new dresses."

"Of course they would," declared grandfather.

So the next day there was a visit to the village dressmaker, who hardly knew what to make of so many white dresses; but, after a little talk with Miss Abitha, she promised that all the gowns should surely be finished in season for Mrs. Neuman's birthday.

"Do you suppose mother and father will really come in time for the birthday?" Lamb whispered to Sister, and Sister whispered back, "If father got our telegram I'm sure he will. Won't it be the loveliest surprise for grandmother!" and the two little girls clasped hands in happy anticipation.

## CHAPTER XX

### GRANDMOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

THE morning of the first day of June was bright and sunny, and everything at Pine Tree farm seemed to be preparing for Mrs. Neuman's birthday. Jimmy Woodyear was raking the lawn, Lamb and Constance were weeding their gardens, while Mr. Eben Bean, in his Sunday clothes, was harnessing Lion into the carryall.

"What do you suppose Eben and Abitha want to go to the village to-day for?" questioned Mrs. Neuman, as she saw them drive off.

"Well," said grandfather, "I have an idea it's something about a surprise for your birthday. You know we can't do all the 'surprising,'" and he nodded his head toward the busy little girls in the garden.

"I did hope we'd hear from Henry before this," continued grandmother. "Then we would have had a lovely surprise for the children; but I begin to think that he isn't coming at all. Perhaps the next thing we know a letter will come for us to start Lamb and Sister right off to Boston." Both the elderly people were silent a moment, and then grandmother exclaimed:

"I declare, I have let Abitha start for the village and forgot to tell her to bring home some coffee. There isn't a grain in this house. You just hitch 'Jet' up and I'll send the children after some. What started Eben off in such a hurry?"

"He said that he wanted to be in season for the train from the West," answered Mr. Neuman. "He said there was a man coming on it whom he wanted to see."

"Some of his folks from Portland way, I suppose," decided grandmother; and grandfather started for the stable to harness Jet, and tell Lamb and Sister to get ready for their ride to the village.

"I guess Miss Abitha isn't a true prophet," announced Lamb as they rode along. "Don't you remember when we went on our spring picnic, Sister, she said she prophesied mother and father would be here to go on the river picnic; and that's to-morrow, and we haven't even heard if father got our telegram."

Sister nodded soberly. "Well," she responded, "I don't know of anything more we can do. It don't seem much use to plan," and she sighed deeply.

"I s'pose if mother and father don't come pretty soon we will have to go back and live in a brick house again," said Lamb echoing her sister's sigh.

Two very quiet, sober little girls drove up to the village store, purchased the coffee, and turned "Jet's" pretty head toward home.

"Lamb!" exclaimed Constance, "let's go down to

the railroad station and ask Mr. Smith if he is sure father got that telegram."

Lamb agreed, and "Jet" was surprised to find that he was not bound for Pine Tree farm after all.

"There's old Lion!" announced Lamb, "and there's Miss Abitha and Mr. Eben Bean talking to Mr. Smith on the platform."

"And there comes the train," replied Constance, bringing "Jet" to a full stop a short distance from the depot.

"We will have to wait until the train goes."

The long train came rolling into the station, and the little girls sat in their cart watching Miss Abitha and her father who hurried down the platform to meet a stout smiling gentleman, and a tall slender lady.

"Sister!" shouted Lamb, "it's mother and father!" and she sprang out of the cart and rushed toward the depot calling out "mother, father," as she ran. Constance was but a step behind her; and "Jet," finding himself deserted, again turned toward home and trotted briskly off.

Mrs. Henry Neuman had just said, "Where are the children?" when a vigorous grasp on each arm informed her that they were close at hand. Then Mr. Neuman came in for his share of their rapturous greeting.

"What has happened to Sister's head?" asked Mrs. Neuman, looking disapprovingly at the short locks now held back by a round comb.



"She was trying to be Peter," explained Lamb.

"I must see if all our luggage came," interrupted Mr. Neuman. "You see, when any one comes home for good they have to bring a good many things," and he and Eben started down the platform with Mr. Smith, while Miss Abitha and Mrs. Neuman and the children went toward the carryall.

"Oh!" exclaimed Sister, "where is 'Jet'?" for there was not a sign of the little black pony.

"He has started for home," laughed Miss Abitha. "Well, I guess we can make room for these passengers."

"I guess we can," said mother giving Lamb a hug.

It was not very long before mother knew all about the short hair, the house-cleaning, and the picnic planned for the next day. Then father and Eben appeared, having left directions for the luggage to be sent over, and it had all to be told over again.

"We've got some lovely presents for you and father," confided Constance as they drove along. "We got them ourselves and they are lovely."

"My! Won't our grandmother be surprised!" exclaimed Lamb happily. "She'd rather have you than all the birthdays in the world."

When "Jet" came trotting into the yard without his little passengers grandfather's first thought was that the pony had run away, but as there was no sign of an accident he decided that the little girls had not fastened Jet at the store, and he had trotted home on

his own account. Nevertheless he started to walk toward the village to make sure that no harm had befallen them.

He had only gone a little way when he heard the sound of wheels and saw Lion trotting toward him. Then in a moment he called out "Henry!" which was echoed by "father!" from the carriage as Mr. Neuman sprang out and ran toward his father as impulsively as Lamb and Constance had run toward him.

The father and son walked together happily toward home, and it was not long before grandmother heard a great commotion in the back yard and hurried to the side door.

"Here's your birthday present, Eunice!" declared grandfather.

It was a busy afternoon for all the family. Mother admired the fawns and the foxes, and father said he liked Constance's hair short much better than when it was long. "Jabezza" and "Betty" and the kittens came in for their share of admiration, and grandmother told of how much help both the children had been to her. "And you are not going to take them away, are you, Constance?" she concluded.

"Why," said young Mrs. Neuman, "we are not going away ourselves. We have come to stay. The children would never forgive us if we took them away from Pine Tree farm. But I think it was Mr. Eben Bean's letter which really decided us."

"Did Eben write?" questioned Mr. Neuman.

"Yes," laughed his daughter-in-law; "long ago, and then came Miss Abitha's letter and then the children's telegram ——"

"What?" interrupted grandmother, and Mrs. Neuman told about the telegram Constance and Lamb had sent.

"Bless their hearts!" exclaimed grandmother. "There never were such thoughtful children."

It was a happy party that started on the river picnic the next morning.

Grandmother, with her pink cheeks and white dress sat beside her son, and was sure that this was the happiest birthday that she could remember. The big farm horses were groomed until their coats shone like satin and Mr. Eben Bean drove them carefully out of the yard, and turned down the river road at a brisk pace.

Sister and Lamb were on the back seat of the big wagon with grandfather, and as they rode along they could hardly sit still. "Just think, grandfather," exclaimed Sister; "now we can begin and do over all the lovely things with father and mother. And Pine Tree farm will be our home always, and none of us will go away."

"And perhaps we can catch some more deer and some little yellow foxes," suggested Lamb.

"What about going to a real school some day?" questioned grandfather.

"Not to Miss Abitha's?" asked Lamb.

Grandfather shook his head. "No," he responded ;  
"a real school where other girls go. Don't you think  
you'd like that ? "

"I would," declared Constance, "but not this year,  
grandfather."

"No, not this year," replied grandfather, looking at  
the happy faces all about him and resolving that they  
should always remember Pine Tree farm as the hap-  
piest place in the world.

**Other Books of this Series are :**

GRANDPA'S LITTLE GIRLS AT SCHOOL  
GRANDPA'S LITTLE GIRLS AND THEIR FRIENDS  
GRANDPA'S LITTLE GIRLS' HOUSE-BOAT PARTY  
GRANDPA'S LITTLE GIRLS AND MISS ABITHA

















